



February 2, 2025

Representative Headland and members of the House Finance and Taxation Committee,

My name is Carter Fong, I am the Executive Area at the Dickinson Area Chamber of Commerce, and previously I've spent twelve years as a high school social studies instructor, including North Dakota history. From those angles, I write with a clear understanding of the past and present challenges that have faced our state's rural areas.

From 1920 to the year 2000, North Dakota was the only state in the country to experience a net population decline. And while we turned the tide in the early part of the 21st century, most of our growth has occurred in the state's four major metropolitan areas. I would hope that our shared goal is for proportional growth across communities of all sizes.

With that being said, the Roosevelt Custer Regional Council is quite simply the strongest voice and the best champion that we have for rural economic growth in the southwest corner of the state. And while Teran Doerr and her team maintain an office in Bowman, I've witnessed firsthand how willing and eager they are to share their expertise and resources with neighbors in Hettinger, Mott, Medora, Dickinson, Killdeer, and beyond. They've produced real and tangible results, as evidenced by some of the other written testimony that you have received.

I trust that this pattern is being repeated throughout the eight economic development regions of our state, and I urge your support of critical funding for the state's regional councils.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carter Fong". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Carter Fong
Executive Director
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