



**Testimony of Cyrena Weeks in support of HB 1524
To the House Finance and Tax Committee
February 4, 2025**

Rep. Headland and members of the House Finance and Tax Committee.

My name is Cyrena Weeks. I am the Executive Director for Tri-County Regional Development Council (Region 1). I am in support for a DO PASS for HB 1524.

A core function of a regional development council is to provide local businesses and organizations with the technical expertise to navigate funding programs at the federal level, such as those administered by the Economic Development Administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, as well as on the state level, including financial programs available through the Bank of North Dakota and the Housing Incentive Fund. They also serve a key role in securing grant funding that is pivotal for increasing local services, reducing slum and blight, and providing critical local infrastructure. A thriving local economy hinges on the success of businesses both big and small, and the assistance that a regional development council can provide to help with finding the right program, gathering application materials, and following through with program commitments is invaluable.

We operate on a very tight budget with just two full-time and one part-time staff in Region One. Our funding sources come mainly from our EDA Planning Grant and local county contributions. EDA has reached out to me to express that our area could be eligible for up to \$2 million in gap financing grants for small businesses. We know the value this funding will have to move small businesses forward in our region. TCRDC will not be able to apply for that funding without a grant writer to assist with this application. Our office also contracts with the Small Business Development Center to assist with seeing clients. Many of those potential new businesses could be eligible for grants, but our office doesn't have the staff necessary to pursue finding grants and then being able to assist with the application process. The funding from HB 1524 would be vital to filling this important role.

In closing, I urge you to support this critical funding bill for Regional Councils statewide.

Sincerely,

Cyrena Weeks
Tri-Conty Regional Development Council
Office: 701-570-7686
cyrenaw@ci.williston.nd.us