

Testimony of Amie Vasichek in support of HB 1524

To the House Finance and Taxation Committee

February 4th, 2025

Chairman Headland, Vice Chairman Hagert, and Committee.

My name is Amie Vasichek, and I have had the honor of serving as the City Auditor of Lakota for close to 16 years. Additionally, I am a proud board member of the Red River Regional Council Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO), which I have served for the past two years and Chair of the Nelson County JDA. Today, I am here to provide my support for HB1524 and the funding of regional planning councils.

Regional councils enable smaller communities and rural areas to access people with a specialized skill set that helps push projects forward. In many of these areas working together is the only way to take a project from a conversation to an actionable plan. The councils are a critical key for progress in our area.

Most recently, the Red River Regional Council and Red River CHDO have assisted Lakota and Nelson County with Spark Homes 2024. We successfully had two new homes built in our small town! This expanded our housing stock, opened two additional well-kept single-family homes and one rental apartment. All this couldn't have been accomplished without the Red River Regional Council and their team. Imagine the possibilities with sustained, dedicated funding to adequately increase staff capacity at all the Regional Councils!

Small towns require ongoing support to develop and assist projects relating to ***infrastructure, childcare, housing, workforce, tourism and so much more.***

Additional, NDCC 54-40.1 was created by the state in 1973 to establish consistent statewide policy for planning, economic development program, operations, coordination and related cooperative activities of state/local governments to resolve issues and problems transcending individual jurisdictions...but did NOT include funding to do so. The lack of a dedicated state funding mechanism leaves the Regional Councils reliant on short-term, piecemeal solutions. Please invest in regional staff capacity to enhance rural development and strengthen our regional economies.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Amie Vasichek
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