



Testimony of Vawnita Best in support of HB 1524

To the House Housing Tax & Finance Committee

February 4th, 2025

Chairman Hedland, Vice-Chair Hagert, and members of the Housing Tax & Finance Committee:

My name is Vawnita Best, Community and Business Development Director, City of Watford City. I represent Mayor Riley as the City of Watford City representative to the Tri-County Regional Council (Region 1) planning council board.

I also administer the Roughrider Fund in Watford City, a 1.5 cent city sales tax passed by the people and dedicated to community and business development in Watford City. SBDC operates out of our office two days a week. It is a combined City/County/SBDC office where we serve entrepreneurs and businesses with startup and expansion services and support. The funds proposed in HB 1524 (\$ 500,000 / per yr. / per regional council) would fill a service gap that startups and expanders currently ask us to provide for them that we aren't able to. They ask us to research and identify business grants, non-traditional capital, and a variety of other technical development resources to support them. As much as we would like to provide them with this requested support, and as much as it would benefit them, we simply do not have the ability to provide them with the resources they are seeking. Support in these areas from Tri-County would be very helpful to our entrepreneurial and business community.

In closing, I urge you to support this critical funding bill for Regional Councils statewide, and to provide a **DO PASS** recommendation on **HB 1524**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Vawnita Best, Community & Business Development Director, City of Watford City
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