



**Testimony of Amber Metz in support of HB 1524
To the House Finance and Tax Committee
Tuesday, February 4, 2025**

Chairman Headland and Members of the Committee,

I am Amber Metz, Executive Director of Lake Agassiz Regional Council. We serve six counties in the southeast including Cass, Ransom, Richland, Sargent, Steele and Traill counties.

I have been part of the team at LARC for nearly two decades and am proud of many accomplishments. Being able to travel throughout our region and point out businesses assisted with loan funds, water towers replaced with grant funds we administered and new companies putting down roots that we assisted in packaging incentives for, are all deeply rewarding.

LARC fields questions regarding zoning ordinances regularly but we could help more townships with updating those ordinances. Many ordinances are old and do not address the kinds of development townships are facing nowadays (e.g. animal feeding operations, solar energy , data centers, preserving farmland from urban growth).

We expanded the reach of a tool utilized by some of our state’s larger communities for years to include our entire region a couple years ago. We wish to continue the subscription to LOIS, a platform used by economic developers and site selectors to find viable locations for businesses seeking to relocate or expand their operations. This tool helps communities attract businesses by marketing properties for sale. This can range from the long-vacant store front on Main Street up to large tracts of land suitable for an agricultural processor. Cost is a major factor in that continuation.

Staff at the regional councils have experience in navigating the complex processes and regulations associated with federal grants. The notable ones being Davis-Bacon prevailing wages, NEPA, and HUD’s Section 3. We are nimble and responsive to opportunities that arise that utilize this federal expertise. For example, regional councils jumped on the opportunity to be a part of the North Central Regional Food Business Center, an initiative sponsored by the USDA that aims to grow the local food economy.

As proud as I am of our organization, **future opportunities** have led me to submit testimony today. What’s next that without targeted professional attention will pass us by? There are communities we don’t hear from, outdated zoning ordinances in townships that may not know who to call without it costing them a year’s fee income, an exciting new opportunity that needs an experienced local voice to put all of the puzzle pieces together. We want to assist all of our areas in being ready to capitalize on the next great opportunity and need stable support to do so.

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

Amber Metz
amber@lakeagassiz.com
701-235-119



417 Main Avenue
Fargo, ND 58103

PHONE: (701) 235-1197
FAX: (701) 235-6706
TDD: (800) 366-6889

