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Testimony of Angelle French
Pembina County Job Development Authority
In Favor House Bill 1524
February 4, 2025

Chairman Headland and Members of the House Finance and Taxation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1524. I am the director of the Pembina County Job Development Authority (PCJDA). We work to create economic prosperity and growth in Pembina County. The main issues we have seen are (and not necessarily in this order): housing, childcare, workforce shortages and retention, and community development for people attraction, along with others.

These issues are widespread and systematic and can be difficult for an office of one, such as the PCJDA to take on by ourselves. We depend on our partners across the region to help tackle such issues. The regional councils help facilitate connections and partnerships across their regions and statewide as needed. These councils are critical for our smaller counties, such as Pembina, as we have limited resources, both financially and in workforce power.

The Red River Regional Council, which serves our region, has helped in many projects for Pembina County. These include a recently completed regional housing study, support and data collection and analysis for the rural food access feasibility project, grant writing support, regional people attraction through the regional Real.Good. brand, securing a \$1.7 million grant through HIF (in conjunction with the Red River Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO)) to develop an 8-plex apartment building in Cavalier where housing is in great demand, along with many other projects. The PCJDA has also contracted with the Red River Regional Council since its inception for staffing, management, and administrative support.

Additionally, NDCC 54-40.1 was created by the state in 1973 because of "the fact that the mobility of the population, changes in economic forces, and governmental mandates within and without the state present problems that cannot always be met by individual counties or cities and that local government planning and development efforts can be strengthened when aided by studies, planning, and implementation of both a statewide and regional character." (N.D.C.C. §54 -40(1)). However, a major issue with this legislation was that the funding for these regional councils was not addressed. The regional councils have been piecemealing together their budgets, which take additional work and time. I wonder what we could have already accomplished if they had dedicated state funding.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of HB 1524. Please support this bill, especially for us smaller rural communities that rely on the support we receive from our regional councils.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Angelle French", written in a cursive style.

Angelle French