



**Testimony of Melissa Beach
Economic Development Association of North Dakota
In Support of HB 1524
February 4, 2025**

Chairman Headland and members of the House Finance and Taxation Committee:

My name is Melissa Beach, and I am the Economic Development Administrator at Minnkota Power Cooperative and serve as the Vice President of the Economic Development Association of North Dakota (EDND).

I am here today to express our strong support for House Bill 1524, which seeks to provide long-needed state funding for North Dakota’s regional council network. For many years, these councils have played a crucial role in addressing regional needs and driving collaboration across our state, all without direct state funding.

Despite the critical role they play, these councils have continued to operate without consistent state funding, relying on limited and often unpredictable resources. Over the last 50 years, the councils have proven the importance of their existence – the primary collaborator between local, state and federal entities and programs.

Through their efforts, these organizations have brought substantial benefits to North Dakota communities—supporting community and economic development, advancing infrastructure projects, promoting workforce development and much more.

House Bill 1524 presents a transformative opportunity to secure sustainable support for these councils. The bill proposes a framework that would require councils to submit biannual work plans aligned with the state’s strategic goals, ensuring accountability and clear progress towards shared objectives. This approach will not only benefit the state but also provide regional councils with the stability needed to make long-term, meaningful impacts.

The passage of HB 1524 would be a critical investment in North Dakota’s future. It would ensure the continued success of the regional council network, a proven asset to the state’s development strategy. More importantly, it reflects the legislature’s commitment to fostering equitable growth and opportunity in every corner of North Dakota.

I strongly encourage the committee to support HB 1524 to provide the essential funding to sustain and empower North Dakota’s regional councils.

Thank you for your time and consideration.