

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2228  
North Dakota State Legislature**

3/14/2025

Honorable Members of the House Finance and Tax Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 2228, which appropriates \$1,000,000 in one-time funding to the Department of Commerce for a Rural Grocery Store Sustainability Grant Program. This bill represents an important step in supporting rural communities like McVille, ND, where the survival of local grocery stores is vital to both our economy and the well-being of our residents.

As you may know, McVille, a small town in Nelson County, experienced firsthand the devastating effects of losing our only grocery store. For nearly a year, McVille residents were without access to essential food items in town. Many of us had to drive long distances to purchase groceries, which placed undue stress on our community members—especially seniors and families without easy access to transportation. The closure of our local store left a significant void in the town, and we learned just how hard it is to keep a town's heart beating without a grocery store.

Thankfully, the Horneck family stepped up and took on the challenge of reopening McVille Market a year ago. Their dedication to the community has not only provided us with a much-needed grocery store but also helped restore a sense of normalcy to our town. McVille Market is now an essential resource, providing jobs, local products, and a place where neighbors gather and connect.

However, like many rural grocery stores, McVille Market faces ongoing challenges, from rising operational costs to the difficulty of maintaining inventory in a small market. This is why Senate Bill 2228 is so crucial. The \$1,000,000 appropriation for the Rural Grocery Store Sustainability Grant Program would provide funding that could help businesses like McVille Market enhance operations, improve infrastructure, and secure the long-term sustainability of rural grocery stores across North Dakota.

The prioritization of grants for existing stores before considering feasibility studies for reopening stores in communities without one is especially meaningful. The Horneck family and others like them have taken great risks to bring back grocery access to small towns, and this funding will help ensure that these businesses thrive and continue to serve their communities.

Additionally, this bill's focus on funding that cannot be used for food processing or offsite operations ensures that grants are directed toward the core mission of keeping grocery stores operational in rural areas, where they are most needed.

I urge the members of this committee to support Senate Bill 2228. This funding would help ensure that towns like McVille do not face the harsh reality of being without a grocery store

again. The ability to support and sustain rural grocery stores is critical not only for the economic health of small towns but also for the quality of life of their residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kirk Brandvold

Farmers and Merchants Bank of North Dakota

Loan Officer

701-740-7878

[kirkbrandvold@fmbnd.com](mailto:kirkbrandvold@fmbnd.com)