



**Testimony of Mark Lyman**  
**Economic Development Association of North Dakota**  
**In Support of SB 2228**  
**March 17, 2025**

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

My name is Mark Lyman, and I am the economic development specialist with the Minot Area Chamber EDC as well as a member of the Economic Development Association of North Dakota (EDND). EDND represents state economic development organizations and businesses on the front lines of economic development efforts throughout North Dakota. The organization's primary purpose is to promote the creation of new wealth throughout North Dakota, develop more vibrant communities and improve quality of life. I am here to express EDND's support for SB 2228.

Healthy and vibrant communities are essential in attracting talent to live and work in our communities. The future of North Dakota's rural areas depends on the quality of life in those communities. Access to a local grocery store is a fundamental part of that quality of life. Rural grocery stores serve as anchor businesses in their communities, providing residents with fresh, frozen, and shelf-stable foods, something we often take for granted until access is lost.

Small-town grocery stores face mounting challenges, from competition with large retailers to increased operational costs and shifting customer bases. SB 2228 is an essential tool to help these businesses remain viable by providing support for store expansion and modernization efforts that improve efficiency, succession planning to ensure continuity when ownership transitions, and assistance in replacing stores that have closed. Additionally, this bill will help rural grocery stores invest in innovative technology to extend produce freshness and improve food quality for customers, including climate-controlled storage solutions and advanced refrigeration systems.

The presence of a grocery store is also a key factor in business attraction and workforce recruitment. For families considering relocation, having convenient access to fresh food is often a deciding factor. Beyond that, grocery stores play a crucial role in supporting community organizations, fundraisers, and events. When a store closes, foot traffic declines, impacting all businesses in the area.

Every community has different assets and needs and attracting and retaining a local grocery store will differ for each community and region. Therefore, establishing a program through SB 2228 is a smart step in preserving our rural communities' vibrancy and productivity.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for SB 2228.