

Greetings:

My name is Vonda Collette and I have been a resident of Grafton for 37 years and a North Dakota resident my entire life. I am writing in support of House Bill 1548 and respectfully ask you to consider supporting this bill. My husband and I are currently the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of our farm family operation and are in the process of transitioning the 4<sup>th</sup> generation to take over. All three of our children, their spouses and 9 grandchildren reside in this community as well as my mother and mother-in-law. Small town and rural living has some amazing benefits but it is time for rural areas to expect more for ourselves and our quality of life! What are the things that we can do to ensure quality of life for our existing residents as well as attract new people to our corner of the state to discover what rural has to offer? In my opinion we need to start offering facilities, programming and services that will benefit people of all ages. A regional wellness center would do that for our area.

While I am grateful that every generation of my family has had the Collette Fitness Center and the Grafton Community Pool as an option to utilize, both of those facilities under their current conditions have some limitations and are in need of serious upgrades. This testimony is my personal insight as to why I am passionate about what a regional wellness center could mean for the Northeast corner of North Dakota. Below is a list of bullet points and concerns that I have that prohibit people from utilizing the Collette Fitness Center in its current condition.

- Lack of privacy in the locker room areas is a huge concern for most people. The days of community showering and undressing in front of strangers in my mind are over.
- There is no zero entry access to the current pool which inhibits my own mother and all elderly people as well as anyone with a physical disability to enter and exit the pool safely. A pool with zero entry access is also at the very top of the wish list for my daughter and daughter-in-laws with young infants and toddlers.
- There are very limited hours for public use of the Collette Fitness pool
- The bathrooms in the main lobby of that facility are in need of updates
- There is very little natural light which is important for mood and aesthetic appearances
- The tunnels that are available to the public for walking are not well lit, there is often times water puddles on the floor from leaking pipes/ceilings, the floors are made of concrete so when it is wet it is also slippery and unsafe as well as not the ideal surface to walk on. You also have to be able to navigate steps to access the tunnels for the public.

My personal reasons to be passionate about the idea of a regional wellness facility are for my family and the many young families who have chosen to come back to rural and set their roots down. I also have two young grandsons who are diagnosed with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis and I know that they would benefit greatly by having a year round facility to receive water therapy. Currently they have to drive at least 50 miles one way to receive this type of treatment. My 85 year old mother and I also suffer from arthritis and stiff joints and we always feels so much better after we have been able to go to the pool to do our exercises. An indoor aquatics facility with the right partners and the potential to offer water therapy services is not only a medical need for my family it is a daily quality of life need for so many people!

The community of Grafton, ND has so many positive things happening right now. We have a state of the art addition to our medical center, a beautiful school, a performing arts center, a regional vocational center, an excellent and well utilized campground and park, new retail businesses, our life skills and transition center, and so much more. The timing for a project such as this seems right. The people of Northeast North Dakota are ready, waiting and expecting a better quality of life with amenities closer to home! Help us make this dream a reality with your support.

Respectfully,

Vonda Collette