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Testimony of Jennifer Dusek in support of HB 1548

To House Human Services Committee - Government Operations Division

Tuesday, January 28, 2025

Representative Ruby and members of the Human Services Committee:

I am Jennifer Dusek, Community Development Director for the City of Grafton. I'm seeking your consideration to support HB 1548 Act to provide an appropriation to the department of health and human services for a fitness center grant.

This type of grant would provide the opportunity of collaboration with local businesses, healthcare programming, and schools. The largest age groups among Grafton residents are children aged 5-to-9, late-career seniors aged 50-to 69, and elderly residents above age 85. We have an aging demographic who are a primary target market for fitness related programs. Birth rates in Walsh County are above average, signaling population vitality. However, we must retain those families as they are necessary workers, students, and community members. To attract and maintain a young workforce, we must provide necessary health, wellness, and recreation opportunities to remain competitive with larger metros.

A wellness center can help reduce the burden on local healthcare facilities by providing preventative care and wellness programs. It can serve to increase tourism, attracting citizens across smaller communities which lack the quality-of-life amenities. Many rural towns have aging infrastructure and are unable to maintain or construct wellness centers, including pools. Overall, the inbound commuting flow into Grafton each day is 70% higher than the daily outflow. Grafton is seen as a regional hub, making it an opportune location to serve other communities in District 19. To keep our agriculture region sector strong, we must sustain rural communities, making them competitive to attracting young families and workers.

This type of grant is part of a community development strategy to keep rural towns livable. For matters of quality of life and rural prosperity, I support this bill appropriation.

In closing, I appreciate your consideration to support of HB 1548.

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer Dusek, District 19

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