

**Testimony of Representative Kristi Henriksen Wilfahrt in Support of HB1548
To the House Human Services Committee
Tuesday, January 28th, 2025**

Chairman Ruby and Members of the House Human Services Committee,

My name is Kristi Henriksen Wilfahrt (Grafton High School, Class of 1988) and I am writing in support of House Bill 1548 and respectfully ask you to consider supporting:

- **A \$10 million appropriation challenge grant** for a new wellness center that could potentially renovate or replace the Collette Fitness Center that is approximately 57 years old. The proposed regional center is anticipated to:
 - Double+ in size to support the growing needs of area residents, and
 - Provide expanded accessible, healthy activity space year-round, and
 - Feature a collaborative business model with partnerships that can include the local Health System, the Grafton Public School System, Grafton Parks & Recreation, the city of Grafton, and the Life Skills & Transition Center, as well as others
 - Increase available activities and programs in many areas like aquatics, youth and other populations athletic and activity spaces, sports acceleration programs, therapies, indoor walking tracks, and many other valuable programs that encourage and will improve the overall health and wellness of all who live in or visit the region,
 - Enhance the services provided to residents of the Life Skills & Transition Center, as well as the many individuals they serve.

- A request to amend **HB 1548 to include an additional \$800,000 to conduct a Facility Condition Assessment** and for preliminary master planning of the existing Life Skills and Transition Center campus. The facility condition assessment will help identify existing buildings for reuse and/or demolition and will provide a baseline cost of capital renewal needs. The preliminary master plan will utilize the facility condition assessment data to develop a comprehensive master plan that identifies Life Skills Transition Center operational needs as well as synergies for community-oriented reuse of property that is no longer needed to serve Life Skills' operations.

Collette Fitness Center Overview

The Collette Fitness Center has been providing “recreation and enrichment activities since 1967 for people receiving residential services at the Life Skills & Transition Center. Collette is a public facility; members of the community can use Collette Fitness Center, including the basketball / gymnasium, racquetball court, cardio room with treadmills, exercise bikes, and rowing machines, the weight room, the indoor heated pool and the walking paths / tunnels. The general public can also participate in fitness classes offered by instructors.

The Opportunity

Last spring (2024), Grafton citizens voted yes (76%) to provide ½ cent sales tax to support a new swimming pool. In August, Grafton Parks & Recreation commissioned a feasibility study of key stakeholders to determine the community’s ability and willingness to support a \$5 million fundraising campaign to replace the current 70-year-old outdoor public pool, which is failing. Conversations with key stakeholders identified concerns that perhaps an outdoor pool used 9-10

weeks a year is not the best use of funding and encouraged the community to consider a year-round facility that focused on overall health & wellness. Several partners have expressed interest in participating in such a new facility and method to promote a healthier community.

IBIS-Enterprises has been hired to complete the business planning, project, and partnership development for a new wellness center that will serve the region. This work is underway and expected to be completed in 90 days. IBIS has a 30-year track record of only working with communities that operate in the black with their wellness facilities. (Including, Choice Health & Fitness in Grand Forks)

Closing

We are coming to you today to ask for a **do pass** on HB 1548. The region has expressed a need and desire for a new wellness center that will improve the quality of life in the region for all, while at the same time offers an opportunity to think strategically about how the community could maximize the use of property that is served by existing infrastructure to meet a community economic development need.

Thank you,

Kristi Henriksen Wilfahrt, Nonprofit & Fund Development Consultant
email:kristi.wilfahrt@outlook.com; cell: 701-317-6729