

January 20, 2025

Members of the Committee, my name is John Machacek and I am a long time member/supporter, past board member and a current volunteer of the Fargo Theatre. I am submitting this written testimony **in support of House Bill No. 1438**, which is a Bill to provide an appropriation to the state historical society for a historic theater restoration grant program.

As a facility, the Fargo Theatre is a historic and iconic structure in Fargo and the State of North Dakota. The FARGO marquee must be one of the most photographed and shared images in the state, probably right up there with photos of Medora. Visitors want to get their photos taken in front of it and it is a go-to photo backdrop for many wedding and prom parties. You see the marquee image on the walls of many area businesses and hotels. There are countless media campaigns that utilize the image. And that is just the exterior of the building!

Inside is not only the large art deco style venue that seats more than 700 people but inside is also where all the wonderful arts & culture programming and community & corporate events occur. Whether a film, festival, concert, comedy show or community event, what goes on inside the Fargo Theatre is an important part of the fabric of engaging our residents and visitors. This kind of engagement helps with the attraction and retention of our population, as well as driving considerable tourism dollars to the region.

Between my love & appreciation for the theatre, and my firsthand knowledge from being a past board member, I could go on for pages on WHY this facility and organization is so important to our region and state. However, I will use my remaining comments tied to this knowledge that not only do I know the staff and board will effectively and efficiently manage funds raised as part of this public-private funding campaign, but I'll also note that the theatre needs this investment to preserve and improve the facility. The last major renovation was in the late 1990's and with this being a century-old building, it is need of some TLC and upgrades. We do not want to see any parts of the building deteriorate and we also want to get up-to-date on some of the obsolete or near obsolete audio, visual and HVAC equipment.

Again, please accept my written letter of testimony **in support of House Bill No. 1438** to provide an appropriation to the state historical society for a historic theater restoration grant program. The ROI of the public and private investments into maintaining, restoring and improving the theatre will provide tremendous tangible and intangible value.

Thank you,
John Machacek
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