

Good Afternoon Chairman, Vice Chair and Committee Members.

For the record, my name is Representative Karen Rohr and I represent District 31. District 31 includes part of Morton County, all of Grant County, all of Sioux County and part of Hettinger County.

I am here in support of SB 2403 relating to a medical facility emergency operating loan program under the medical facility infrastructure loan fund.

I rise today in strong support of this bill appropriating one-time funding for a medical facility operating loan to the Jacobson Memorial Hospital Care Center and Clinic (JMHCC) , a critical access hospital located in Elgin, North Dakota.

I approach this issue not only as a legislator, responsible for stewardship of public resources, but also as a frontline healthcare provider who understands what access to care truly means for rural patients and families.

As a board-certified NP who has practiced in rural healthcare I understand the daily realities faced by patients, providers, critical access hospitals and rural clinics. I have worked as NP at rural clinics located in New Salem, Center, Hebron, Steele and Richardton.

Critical access hospitals are not optional infrastructure in rural North Dakota — they are essential. In communities like Elgin and surrounding communities, the local hospital is often the only source of emergency care, inpatient stabilization, primary care services, and skilled nursing support within many miles. When minutes matter, there is no substitute for a nearby facility staffed by professionals who know their community.

The COO of JMHCC informed me that closure of this facility would have devastating consequences for residents of Elgin, Glen Ullin, Richardton, New Leipzig, Carson, Mott, Flasher and surrounding frontier communities.

As a nurse practitioner, I have seen firsthand the consequences when rural healthcare services are weakened or lost. Delayed care leads to poorer outcomes, higher costs, and unnecessary suffering. Patients with chronic disease go unmanaged. Emergencies become life-threatening due to transport times. Families are forced to travel hours for routine care, which disproportionately impacts elderly residents, farmers, and working families.