

**Testimony of Laura Lacher
Economic Development Association of North Dakota
In Support of HB 1275
January 23, 2025**

Chair Porter and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Laura Lacher, and I am the executive director of the Economic Development Association of North Dakota (EDND). EDND represents more than 80 state economic development organizations and businesses on the front line of economic development efforts throughout North Dakota. The organization's primary purpose is to promote the creation of new wealth throughout North Dakota, develop more vibrant communities and improve quality of life. I want to express our support for HB 1275.

EDND has been involved in conversations with utility companies, legislators, and the Public Service Commission for many years about the topic of natural gas. The availability of natural gas and the expansion of natural gas infrastructure play a vital role in the continued growth and vitality of many businesses, communities and the state. Because of its low-cost and abundance, natural gas offers the promise of an energy future that is affordable and accessible to all incomes and communities. Communities with access to natural gas have an advantage over communities without it.

The challenge of providing natural gas to unserved or underserved communities lies in financing the gap between the existing pipelines and the community. A lot needs to be done to fill this gap, and we support every effort, including an accessibility study to bring natural gas services to underserved communities throughout the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for HB 1275 and for your continued commitment to keeping North Dakota globally competitive and diversifying the state's economy.