

MILNOR

North Dakota

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Testimony of Carol Peterson

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I am testifying today as the Economic Development Coordinator and a citizen of Milnor, ND to support funding for the Department of Commerce, Workforce Housing.

The Milnor community has made great strides recently, adding 26 new businesses in the past 15 years, some of which are anchor businesses such as a veterinary service, HVAC/electrical business, a plumbing enterprise, pet care/kennel, a licensed childcare center, MDU Natural Gas, as well as a new John Deere dealership. We continue to support all our long-term key businesses such as Milnor Market Grocery, Stock Growers Bank, Dakota Valley Electric Cooperative, Milnor Grain, Community Credit Union, Milnor Clinic, and many others. We have changed the appeal of our downtown business district with new street lights, sidewalks, and several new businesses. Our childcare center, that was originally built in 2014 has been recently enlarged in 2024, to accommodate up to 122 children to attend daycare, pre-school, and after-school programs. This is the only licensed childcare center in Sargent County and supports our K-12 school system as well as the employees at Doosan Bobcat and all our other local businesses and farms. Milnor used the Rural Workforce Impact Program (RWIP) grant to help enlarge the childcare center from 5,000 square feet to an 8,800 square foot facility, allowing their licensed capacity to increase from 67 to 122 children.

The people who live and work in southeast North Dakota enjoy our scenic lakes area which includes the Dead Colt Creek Recreation Area, Silver Lake Recreation Area, Tewaukon National Wildlife Refuge, the Storm Lake National Wildlife Refuge and the Sheyenne National Grasslands with the North Country National Scenic Trail, all located within minutes of the Milnor community.

Our existing businesses, expanding businesses and new enterprises have added to our area's workforce. Many of our citizens work in Milnor or have a ten-minute drive to the Doosan Bobcat plant that employs over 1,500 people from southeast North Dakota. Our area people also work at and support many of the

suppliers that Bobcat relies on. Businesses such as Comstock Construction, Lunseth Plumbing, HA Thompson & Sons, Gates Inc., Job Erection, ICS, Grotberg Electric (which all work on-site at the Bobcat factory), along with local support industries such as Thompson Customizing, Ray Mac, Wurth Service Supply, Fargo Assembly, J & M Printing, Neuweg Industries, Briton Manufacturing, several trucking companies, and many other auxiliary businesses working with and supporting Bobcat. However, Doosan Bobcat has been continually moving production lines to North Carolina and other locations due to lack of workforce in our area which has been caused by a lack of housing. These production reductions at Bobcat causes a ripple effect for their supporting industries, businesses and the financial well-being of southeast North Dakota. Readily available housing would allow a smooth transition for the potential employee coming from within North Dakota or from in-migration.

Milnor has used the Renaissance Zone incentives which has helped immensely in rehabbing our older homes. We have worked with the Sargent County JDA in building two spec homes, that have been sold. Milnor has been fortunate to have had 17 new homes built in the past 15 years by homeowners, but we have not been able to entice a developer to build multi-family units in our community which is one of the factors causing our workforce crisis. The area does not have enough homes and not every potential employee wants to or is financially capable of buying a single-family home, many want or need an apartment. We do not have local developers in our area and the developers from Fargo (80 miles) stress additional costs in building due to the windshield time to the job sites. Milnor is shovel-ready for homes and multi-family units with our new housing development, including infrastructure such as roads, water, sewer and natural gas. We also have several other incentives including rebates on the lots. Our area needs State of North Dakota financial assistance to incentivize the developers to come to smaller communities to build the housing our workforce needs today and into the future. The Milnor 2023 Housing Study stresses the need for additional housing, both residential and multi-family. (Housing Study on Milnor website: [2023 - Housing Study - Milnor, ND](#)). But we lack the finances and local talent and other incentives to exercise such a plan.

Milnor supports additional workforce housing in the entire State of North Dakota. The southeast area of North Dakota, which includes our state's largest manufacturing facility with all their supporting businesses, needs your help.