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January 15, 2025

Chairman Wanzek and Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee,

Re: SB 2018

My name is Amie Vasichek, and I have had the honor of serving as the City Auditor of Lakota for close to 16 years. Additionally, I am a proud board member of the Red River Regional Council Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO), which I have served for the past two years and Chair of the Nelson County JDA. Today, I am here to provide my unequivocal support for the proposed **Senate Bill 2018** that seeks to allocate additional funding to the pilot program aimed at community revitalization using the Rural Workforce Housing grant program.

Our small town of Lakota, like many other small communities, has faced significant challenges in addressing properties that are dilapidated or abandoned. These areas have not only diminished the aesthetic appeal of our neighborhoods but have also posed safety hazards and negatively impacted property values.

Our community's grant application was fortunate to be selected as a community revitalization project through the Rural Workforce Housing grant program. This initiative provided much-needed resources and support, providing Lakota with a grant of approximately \$161,000. Through this program, we were able to demolish and remove two large, dilapidated structures in a business district that were beyond repair, opening available lots to build new structures or expand business on.

The benefits of participating in the pilot program have been significant:

- **Safety Improvements:** Removing hazardous structures has enhanced the safety of our neighborhoods, reducing the risk of accidents and criminal activity.
- **Economic Growth:** The revitalized areas can attract new or expanding businesses, leading to job creation and increased economic activity.

While the pilot program has yielded positive results, the work is far from complete. Many communities, including ours, require sustained opportunities to continue and expand these efforts. The pilot program for community revitalization has demonstrated its effectiveness with our city and others. However, to build on this success and ensure long-term sustainability, additional funding is imperative. I urge you to support **SB 2018** and provide the necessary resources to help communities like Lakota continue to thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Amie Vasichek

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