

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 2225
Senate Appropriations - Governmental Operations Division
January 27, 2025

Brandon Bochenski, Mayor, City of Grand Forks, ND

Chairman Wanzek and members of the Senate Appropriations Government Operations Division, I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and express the City's support for Senate Bill 2225, along with a respectful request for consideration of raising the allocation cap to communities of greater than 20,000 individuals. Raising the cap would allow for economies of scale which further drives costs down for the benefit of North Dakota residents.

Housing availability and affordability is a growing national crisis from which Grand Forks has not been immune. On the contrary, as significant economic projects move forward in our region and paired with North Dakota's ongoing workforce challenges, the lack of availability and affordability of market rate housing has become a major constraint to the attraction and retention of workforce, and by extension to sustained future growth (not to mention quality of life for North Dakota residents).

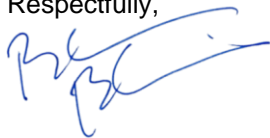
Local housing development has not kept pace to accommodate this growth as cost of infrastructure, labor, and building materials has been a major impediment. Not only does rising infrastructure cost deter private investment, it also limits supply of building lots further negatively impacting affordability for homeowners.

Public-Private partnerships in this area has the potential to make a major impact and that is what is required as the challenges we face require bold, strategic action, which Grand Forks is prepared to take. Expectedly though, this bold action requires a larger investment to achieve the impactful outcomes we need. It is in that spirit that I humbly request you consider eliminating or raising the currently-proposed \$1.5 million allocation cap to communities like Grand Forks. We want to take up this challenge head-on with major, strategic investments. The flexibility to tailor available resources in large scale would be invaluable in maximizing economic returns. Removing the cap would also allow the commerce department to ensure funds are dispersed both widely across the state and in the most impactful manner.

The funding proposed in SB 2225 presents an incredible opportunity for state, local, and private sector partners to come together to address a critical need for our community and our state and it has our wholehearted support.

The City of Grand Forks asks for a DO PASS recommendation for SB 2225.

Respectfully,



Brandon Bochenski
Mayor of Grand Forks