

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2225

North Dakota Sixty-Ninth Legislative Assembly

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Chairman Wanzek and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 2225, an essential step toward addressing the pressing housing needs in North Dakota.

The housing shortage in North Dakota has become a significant challenge, impacting families, employers, and the overall economic growth of our communities. By providing grants to political subdivisions based on population size, the bill ensures that resources are equitably distributed to address the unique needs of rural, small, and urban communities alike. One of the bill's key strengths is this targeted investment approach, the tiered allocation reflects a commitment to ensuring that no part of North Dakota is left behind in the effort to expand housing opportunities.

Another highlight of Senate Bill 2225 is its emphasis on public-private collaboration. The requirement for dollar-for-dollar matching funds from nonstate sources—equally contributed by political subdivisions, local developers, and private entities—maximizes the program's impact. This collaborative framework leverages the state resources in a way that also allows the political subdivisions the ability to make strategic investments in their communities. Private contributions, whether from local development corporations, donations, or in-kind contributions, demonstrate a shared commitment to addressing housing challenges and ensure that the funding generates broad-based support and engagement.

Additionally, this bill provides communities with the flexibility to identify and address their specific housing needs. Recognizing that the housing demands of a rural town differ from those of a metropolitan area, the program allows political subdivisions to work cooperatively to create solutions tailored to their unique circumstances. This community-driven approach ensures that the funding is utilized effectively, focusing on projects that align with local priorities and have the most immediate and meaningful impact.

Finally, Senate Bill 2225 includes mechanisms for accountability and transparency, which are essential for the responsible use of public funds. By requiring a report to legislative management and the governor, the program ensures that its progress is closely monitored. The report will provide valuable insights into the number of housing units supported, the communities benefiting from grants, and the sources of matching funds raised. This level of oversight helps build public trust and provides a foundation for refining future housing initiatives.

This legislation is critical for fostering economic growth and ensuring that all North Dakotans have access to quality housing. By reducing barriers to infrastructure development, Senate Bill 2225 will help attract and retain talent, support local businesses, and build stronger, more resilient communities.

I urge this committee to pass Senate Bill 2225 and demonstrate your commitment to addressing one of the most pressing issues facing our state today. Thank you for considering this important legislation.

Respectfully,
Corry Shevlin