



Senate Bill 2225 Testimony: In Favor
Hon. Terry Wanzek, Chairman
Senate Appropriations – Government Operations Division

January 27, 2025

Chairman Wanzek and Committee Members,

My name is Anna Nelson, Executive Director of the City of Williston Economic Development Department. As is the case across the state, workforce development has become a priority for our department, which includes addressing childcare and housing challenges that have proven a hindrance to workforce and economic growth.

As a participant in former Governor Doug Burgum's roundtable in Williston as part of his North Dakota Housing Initiative, I am grateful to see that the HOPE Housing Infrastructure Grant program addresses some of the challenges and desires expressed during that discussion, and want to express my support of SB2225, with a request to revise the match requirement.

Being the largest community in the region, Williston serves as a hub for businesses, activities, and housing for individuals and businesses in a radius of up to 120 miles. Looking ahead to the next five years, the Williston area is set to see substantial growth with several proposed projects:

- Williston Square construction, including:
 - Highway 2 re-direct project
 - Sloulin Elementary School
 - Black Diamond Estates
 - Retail/food and beverage projects
- Cerilon gas-to-liquids plant
- Basin Electric generation stations
- More to be announced

These are projected to bring in more than 3,000 temporary workers during construction and another more than 500 employees to fill permanent jobs. This does not even take into account current business expansions or any other projects in the area. With our rental units at about 98% occupancy, low housing inventory, and families that are ready to transition, we know that we will need to build a substantial amount of rooftops to be able to meet demand.

After assessing our current housing situation, fellow department heads and I have determined that, while we have a good number of shovel-ready lots available, conversations with local builders have informed us that high materials and labor costs as well as a lack of subcontractors have limited their ability to build, especially to scale. These challenges have illustrated the need to support homebuilding activity in some capacity, and we are pleased to see the potential assistance that could come from SB2225 to ensure we can have the infrastructure in place to support the much-needed additional rooftops.



In reviewing the bill, there were some questions raised regarding the details of the match requirement, specifically regarding their clarity and attainability. Reflecting on not just our needs but the needs of our rural neighbors, we would respectfully ask this committee to consider a simpler and more direct percentage match, perhaps a 4:1 (state funds:non-state or matching funds) ratio would allow for more accessibility and flexibility.

I would be remiss if I did not extend my sincere thanks to the legislative body for considering multiple approaches to address the dire need to increase housing availability and affordability across the state. North Dakota is increasingly becoming a state in which people want to invest and live, and it is prudent that we ensure that we are able to welcome new businesses and residents, offering them a place to call home here in our great state.

We encourage your consideration of the above request, along with a Do Pass recommendation for SB2225.

Thank you for your efforts and I invite you to please reach out should you have any questions or need additional information from us here in Williston.

Sincerely,

Anna Nelson

Anna Nelson
Executive Director
annan@ci.williston.nd.us
(c) 701-651-8265