



**Testimony of Adrienne Olson in support of SB 2228  
To the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee  
February 6, 2025**

Senator Luick and members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee,

My name is Adrienne Olson, Community and Economic Development Director in Casselton, ND. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB 2228.

Casselton is a steadily growing rural city of 2,500 people with a diverse business community, and significant plans for residential and commercial development. Our residents face challenges in accessing fresh produce and essential goods, leading to inconvenience and economic leakage as they travel the 40-mile round trip to Fargo for groceries. Without a grocer, we risk losing an entire generation of people who have lived their lives in Casselton, but now must consider moving to a bigger city that provides for all their needs. We must be a place for all generations to maintain a vibrant community that attracts and retains workforce. We owe it to our older residents who simply can't independently make the trip to Fargo.

Two years after our only grocery store closed, the ability to access the Rural Food Sustainability Grant in 2024 for a feasibility study was game-changing in the community discussion regarding the attraction of a new grocery store. Our study formalized our market opportunity, potential locations, demographics and customer statistics, community resources, infrastructure and support. It engaged more than 600 residents in the discussion, nearly 25% of our city.

Beyond the completed study, which is a vital tool in sharing our story and market opportunity with potential grocers, our grant funding led to connections with dozens of grocery leaders and advisors who continue to support Casselton in our search for a grocery operator. It provided Casselton a path forward.

I appreciate this bill directs funds first to rural communities struggling to hold onto their grocers. It's easier to keep what you have than to start over. Funds that cover feasibility studies are also funds well spent.

In closing, I urge you to support this bill that will support rural grocers and their communities, and the communities with a dream of a local grocery store. Grocery stores are more than retail amenities in rural North Dakota communities; they are vital community hubs that supply the necessities to lead healthy lives.

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