

Testimony SB2228

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Testimony in Support for SB2228

To the Senate Ag and Veterans Committee,

Mr Chairman,

I'm writing to you to support SB2228 because our city Casselton has benefited from the program and many other communities have need of this bill and state support for it. I would even go a step further asking that you consider extending the funding to support communities that just need to get over the hump of having infrastructure costs for opening their stores.

Casselton lost our grocery store nearly 5 years ago now and it was one of my priorities as a city councilman to try and return it if possible. But rural communities are suffering more. Its been stated in studies funded by the senate in 2021 that we have lost nearly half of our rural grocery stores in the last 10 years and more than half of the ones remaining are in financial trouble.

This is causing it to get harder and harder to access food without driving long distances in rural communities. Oftentimes in Casselton you don't always have access to all the produce that you would want or exactly the products that you are looking for. And it gets harder the further out you get away from the Fargo Moorhead, Bismarck, or Grand Forks Areas. We have many food deserts where it is hard to find unprocessed food at a reasonable price, and making sure that people on SNAP and WIC have access to places that will take their cards has been a priority for me as well. Our Elderly community also benefits from local grocery stores to make sure that they do not have to travel far to get their groceries as well.

In my time talking with Economic Development Committee members in Casselton it seems that our barrier is the initial building of the facility. Freezers and Produce rack costs are the biggest barrier to entry, finding a supplier that would want to come out and do deliveries is another large problem, finally keeping prices affordable despite this is the third largest problem.

In short this program is great to help us identify the needs of the community, but the problem is sometimes it's just a study that will tell us that we don't have the population base to support a grocery store and we already know that. We need the states help to develop a regional approach that could give us a larger pool of customers to work with makes supply chains more efficient.

Thank you for your Consideration and we urge a DO PASS