



Testimony of Carol Peterson

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January 25, 2025

I come before you today as the Economic Development Coordinator and a citizen of Milnor, ND to support funding the Department of Commerce - RURAL GROCERY STORE SUSTAINABILITY AND FOOD ACCESS EXPANSION GRANTS.

Milnor has in the past been able to take part in the many programs and grants that the Department of Commerce has used to give our community the opportunity to grow and focus on our future. Small communities do not need a hand-out but a hand-up to become more appealing and self-sufficient.

Every community has a workforce that has basic requirements that need to be met. Grocery stores and food access in small rural communities are necessary to sustain a community and help them subsist and/or grow. A community not meeting the needs of its citizens will see an out-migration of the workforce to other areas which have the amenities required. Those individuals and families that stay have a daily/weekly struggle to travel to other areas to fulfill the basic required necessities for living in that small community.

Just a few years ago, our grocery store went bankrupt because of poor management. The City of Milnor purchased the store, and replaced all the refrigeration, freezers, and lighting, as well as many other improvements, to make the facility appealing and useable. We now have the building leased to an entrepreneur at a minimum amount to make it successful. The need for a reliable food source is absolutely necessary to the existence of our town. Milnor is fortunate to have a grocery store, but we lack sufficient square footage to offer the many items needed on a daily basis. We are seeing an issue with people leaving the community to access foods and other items they desire because our store is not large enough. According to the Market Analysis and Feasibility Report by Praxis Group for Milnor, Sargent County is not meeting the demand for items found in a grocery store.

2022 Sargent County Grocery Store Demand Study by Praxis Group

Total Demand	\$ 16,187,847
Demand met In-Region	\$ 2,444,346

We need assistance from the State of North Dakota with programs that will help rural communities address the food access issues we are faced with today. The Milnor area has a large workforce that needs to consistently have quality food, at reasonable prices, and in the volume necessary to keep our communities functioning. Milnor is within a ten-minute drive to the largest manufacturing company in the state, Doosan Bobcat. There are many other businesses and spinoff industries in the area that support the Bobcat factory with components and services that go into the manufacture of the Bobcat machines. These companies include Comstock Construction, Lunseth Plumbing, HA Thompson & Sons, Gates Inc., Job Erection, Grotberg Electric, ICS, (which all work on-site at the Bobcat factory) along with support industries such as Briton Manufacturing, Thompson Customizing, Ray Mac, Wurth Service Supply, Fargo Assembly, J & M Printing, trucking companies and many other auxiliary businesses working with Bobcat. We need financial assistance from the State of North Dakota to help our area meet the needs of today's workforce and support our workers, our youth, and our seniors. This will be imperative if our area workforce is to continue to grow in the future.

Please help rural North Dakota by funding the North Dakota Department of Commerce so they can assist us in making the changes and improvements we all need. North Dakota needs vibrant communities of all sizes, and with the assistance from the Commerce Department, rural grocery stores will make changes and grow, which will be a win/win for all of us.

Survive to Thrive - let's take our rural communities from surviving to thriving.

Thank you for your time.