



SENATE BILL NO. 2228
SENATE AGRICULTURE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
LARRY LUICK, CHAIR
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 2228

Chairman Luick and members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee, I am Parrell Grossman, and it is my privilege to be the Legislative Director for the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association. I appear in support of Senate Bill 2228.

The North Dakota Soybean Growers Association advocates for 8,900 operations that raise soybeans in North Dakota. In 2024, those soybean farmers planted 6,600,000 acres of soybeans, producing over 245 million bushels of soybeans.

The Association expresses strong support for Senate Bill No. 2228, which seeks to establish an appropriation for a Rural Grocery Store Sustainability and Food Access Expansion Grant Program under the Department of Commerce. This legislation is an important step toward ensuring that North Dakota's rural communities continue to have access to essential food supplies and economic stability.

Rural grocery stores are the backbone of small communities in providing access to fresh and nutritious food and supporting local economies. Our rural communities certainly value their local gas stations and convenience stores. However, many rural grocery stores are facing increasing financial challenges, including increasing operational costs, possible supply chain disruptions, and population decline. Without support, these stores are at risk of closure, leaving residents with limited food access and forcing them to travel long distances to purchase basic food and other necessities.

Further, these grocery stores sustain critical food access for rural residents, particularly the elderly, disabled, or others without reliable transportation and, without doubt, help provide these more vulnerable residents with a sense of

independence. Something as simple as a grocery store can allow these persons to remain in communities they love and in which they have lived their entire lives.

Yes, by this time in the session, there are so many requests for funding and appropriations, and you have many difficult decisions to make in deciding whether to approve these requests. Nonetheless, the Association believes these grocery stores are important, and that these grants are needed and make so much sense.

As I thought about this legislation, I was reminded that many residents in urban areas of North Dakota have so many choices of grocery stores alone. In Bismarck, in most grocery stores I can choose from at least ten selections of milk, breads, ice creams, fruits and vegetables, and so forth. I can also select from several different over-the-counter cold medicines for my grandchildren when the pharmacies are closed. Rural communities are, or certainly would be, grateful to just have a grocery store.

We are fortunate to have so many farmers, ranchers, and ag producers of all kinds contributing to our economy, as well as the other rural residents that provide support and services to these communities, whether law enforcement, school teachers, or business owners. The Association respectfully suggests that it is not too much to look for, or ask for, some assistance to retain or attract these rural grocery stores. This proposed legislation is one excellent way to do so.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee, the Association respectfully urges you to give Senate Bill 2228 a “Do Pass” recommendation.

Thank you for your consideration and I would be pleased to answer any questions.