



www.graftonnd.gov
PO Box 578 | 5 East 4th St | Grafton, ND 58237
Phone: 701.352.2730 | Fax: 701.352.2730 | TDD: 701.352.1411

Testimony of Jennifer Dusek in support of SB 2390
To the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs
Friday February 7th, 2025

Chairman Luick, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee:

I am Jennifer Dusek, Community Development Director for the City of Grafton. I'm seeking your consideration to support SB 2390, a bill that will create a rural catalyst grant program to support quality of life improvement projects for rural communities.

This grant program identifies rural communities as those with a population of 8,500 or less. Grafton is a rural community of 4,100 residents and is a hub to neighboring communities with populations ranging from 250 to 1,500 people. Our communities vary in size yet rely on one another to succeed. Many of our residents live and work within an hour radius of one another. This means that when quality of life efforts are made in Park River (a town 15 miles away), they also positively impact the residents of Grafton. When a new business, recreation center, or health service opens in Grafton, we see a strengthening to the entire region. This emphasizes the greater return that quality of life grants will make to rural communities as compared to urban cities.

Our local Economic Development Committee sees the needs of our town related to downtown improvements, housing, workforce attraction, community development, and essential services. We simply do not have the financial resources available to address many of these essential issues. We continue to receive grant requests from local groups with strategic plans and projects that would have a direct economic impact. Some of these requests total \$500,000. However, for years, us as rural towns have lacked the opportunity to access state grants that favor urban centers who have staff capacity and greater resources. This bill will allow our small towns with the opportunity to provide essential services and execute necessary quality of life projects to keep our rural towns healthy and prosperous. Some of these projects include a wellness facility, hockey rinks, improved town entrances, safer intersections, accessibility improvements to our library, bike paths, and downtown spaces. We are looking for support to complete sustainable projects that will have lasting impact.

Region 4 provides essential manufacturing and agriculture industries for the state of North Dakota. Without rural communities, these industries suffer. To retain our workforce and rural industries, we must provide necessary quality of life services to the rural towns that carry these industries.

I would like to extend my gratitude for considering this bill, one that supports small towns and sees the needs of rural residents across the state. Rural North Dakota is ready to not just survive but prosper. For matters of quality of life and rural prosperity, I support this bill.

In closing, I encourage your support of SB 2390.

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer Dusek, District 19
jdusek@graftonnd.gov
(701) 352-1561