

Testimony of Briselda Hernandez Herrera in support of SB2390
To the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs
Friday, February 7, 2025

Chairman Luick, Vice Chairwoman Myrdal, and Committee Members,

My name is Briselda Hernandez Herrera, and I am the Executive Director of Souris Basin Planning Council (SBPC). SBPC serves a seven-county region comprised of Bottineau, Burke, McHenry, Mountrail, Pierce, Renville, and Ward counties. I have had the privilege of working with communities, leaders, and businesses for over 10 years. I have seen firsthand the power of people and communities working together to improve quality of life and create opportunities for economic growth. On the other hand, many of the communities that I have worked with have struggled to advance community projects due to limited funding.

I come before you today in support of SB2390. SB2390 will provide the much-needed funding for rural communities with a population of **up to 8,500** that may not qualify for other programs and/or that need additional support to complete community projects. A population of 8,500 will ensure that communities like Bottineau, New Town, Rugby, Stanley, Surrey, and Velva also have an opportunity to apply for funding. Several projects that may benefit from this funding include a senior citizen home project in Mohall, a warning system in Glenburn, a housing project in Bottineau, food pantries in Makoti and Bowbells, and multiple daycare center projects throughout the region.

SB2390 encourages collaboration by engaging regional councils in the process. Formed by state law (NDCC 54-40.1), North Dakota's eight regional councils are a boots-on-the-ground resource that provide the support to advance community projects. Regional councils are deeply embedded in the community offering technical assistance, expertise, and a structure for collaboration. As a public servant, I understand the importance of ensuring that we are good stewards of public dollars. I believe regional councils have a proven track record of being transparent and accountable. Regional councils operate under strict governance which includes annual reporting and audits. Their boards are made up of elected city officials and county commissioners (majority) and regional stakeholders. Additionally, regional councils are well-connected and rely on strategic partnerships to tackle needs. They have a network of long-term, trusted relationships with local and state leadership.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Briselda Hernandez Herrera

briselda@sourisbasin.org

701.712.7308