



**Testimony of Vawnita Best**  
**Community Development Department – City of Watford City**  
**SUPPORT of HB 1524**  
**March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

Chairman Barta and members of Senate Industry and Business Committee,

My name is Vawnita Best, Community and Business Development Director, City of Watford City. I represent Mayor Phil Riley as the City of Watford City representative to the Tri-County Regional Development Council (Region 1) board of directors.

I also administer the Roughrider Fund in Watford City, a 1.5 cent city sales tax passed by the people and dedicated to community and business development in Watford City. We leverage a portion of these fund to incentive business development and expansion in Watford City. SBDC operates out of our office two days a week. It is a combined City/County/SBDC office where we work daily with entrepreneurs and businesses with startup and expansion services and support.

The funding proposed in HB 1524 (\$ 150,000 / per yr. / per regional council) would fill a current service gap that exists for business startups and expansions in Watford City, a member of Tri-County Region 1 Development Council. Business owners often request support to research and identify business grants, non-traditional capital, and a variety of other technical development resources to support their startup and expansion plans. Support in identifying and accessing these resources would improve business outcomes and success for the businesses that are the backbone of rural North Dakota communities.

As much as we would like to provide them with this requested support, and as much as it would benefit our business community, we simply do not have the capacity to do so. If Tri-County Regional Development Council had the funding resources proposed in 1524 to provide these resources, they would be a strong development partner for us in these efforts to support these needs in our community.

To close, I urge you to support this critical funding bill for Regional Councils statewide, and to provide a **DO PASS** recommendation on **HB 1524**, and support adequate appropriations to fund skill sets to fill our existing service gap.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vawnita Best", is written over the "Sincerely," and extends down towards the contact information.

Vawnita Best, Community & Business Development Director, City of Watford City  
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