

**Testimony Prepared for the
Senate Finance and Taxation Committee
March 16, 2021**

By: Kandace Desjarlais, Rolette County Treasurer

RE: House Bill 1449

Good morning Chairman Bell and Finance and Taxation Committee Members,

I, Kandace Desjarlais, submit testimony in support of the above referenced bill.

To reiterate the testimony that Val McCloud has given, Rolette County is in desperate need of a long-term solution for the numerous issues we face every day. I seek your support for the Long-Term financial assistance for Rolette County.

To add to Mrs. McCloud's testimony, Rolette County has actively sought to find additional revenue considerations prior to seeking assistance from the State. These attempts to increase revenues adversely affected the small and limited tax base of Rolette County.

Rolette County has a population of approximately fifteen thousand (15,000) people. Of that amount, only one-third (1/3) of the population are assessed for property taxes. This small number of tax payers is what funds Rolette County's essential services. Due to the lack of tax dollars, Rolette County is unable to provide all of the state mandated services required for each and every county office.

The efforts attempted by the Board of County Commissioners to raise revenue, were met with frustration and resistance by the residents of Rolette County. Given the high rate of poverty in Rolette County, which is 29.3% according to the US Census Bureau, this may account for the reason behind the vexation. In addition, Rolette County reported the highest unemployment rate (10.4%) which may be due to very few jobs compared to the population, in other words, there are more job seekers than there are job opportunities. These numbers may explain the opposition to the initiatives illustrated in Mrs. McCloud's testimony.

The state mandates essential services that Rolette County must provide. As elected county officials, we have an obligation to uphold our oath to provide these services to our constituents. Currently, due to the lack of funding we are unable to provide the quality of assistance and meet the needs of the people at an adequate level. The revenue shortfalls we are facing at Rolette County has pushed us to consider budgetary cuts within each department. These cuts have proven that they are not a long-term solution, as each department is compromising its ability to perform its jobs effectively. In addition, the amount saved by these cuts, does not even begin to address the need.

In conclusion, Rolette County has exhausted all options to raise revenue. With the support of HB 1449, this will ensure that Rolette County is able to continue to successfully carry out the state mandates.

Thank you for your time.