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COMMITTEES:
Appropriations

April 5, 2021

HB 1284 – Local Special Event Licensure

Chairman Diane Larson and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of several local businesses and communities across the state, I'm honored to introduce HB 1284 which updates North Dakota's alcohol special event laws to be consistent with the rest of Title 5.

A brief history of special event laws in North Dakota:

- 1977 – Political subdivisions first allowed to issue special event permits for festivals, public dances, and more
- 1991 – Special event permits could be issued for up to 14 days, including Sundays
- 1999 – Political subdivisions may issue co-mingled special event permits selling beer, wine, or sparkling wine
- 2017 – Political subdivisions may issue special event permits to vendors for events on their premises

Events and festivals are some of the most vibrant activities within our communities – and most are authorized by a locally issued special event permit. Moreover, many private and family celebrations are possible because of locally controlled special event permits.

Which brings us to HB 1284:

Over the years, Grand Forks (like many other towns) have found success with regulated, co-mingled special events. These events are patrolled by city police and private security, and most are required to have a public safety plan that is approved by city police, fire department, public health, streets, and other city government offices.

Grand Forks safety officials fully support co-mingled special events because it reduces binge-drinking and reckless behaviors often seen in events limited to 21+, or with designated 21+ sections.

If a vendor is hired to host a special event (e.g. wedding celebration), the city or county may not issue a special event permit that includes the sale of liquor. A micro-distillery may not participate in a special event unless they host an event using their own event licenses (and therefore cannot sell or serve any other products beyond what they produce.)

Our alcohol laws have evolved greatly over the last generation; thanks to these modifications along with the emergence of micro-distilleries across the state, local vendors and political subdivisions are requesting we give them the discretion to approve special events to liquor, in addition to beer, wine, sparkling wine currently allowed.

Before I conclude, allow me to walk through the bill with you briefly:

Subsection 2 is amended with some technical updates and removes language limiting special events only to the service of beer, wine, or sparkling wine.

Subsections 2a, b, and c are removed as they are duplicative in law under this change. Political subdivisions have the authority to establish permitting rules (page 2 lines 9-10), servers must follow all state and local ordinances, and minors may not consume or possess alcohol at a special event (page 2, lines 7-9.)

Section 2 of the bill updates NDCC 5-02-06 related to prohibitions of individuals under the age of 21. This amends subsection 5 of current code pertaining to special events, permitting minors to attend locally authorized events where any type of alcohol is sold.

Thank you again for the opportunity to walk you through the bill, Chairman Larson and members of the committee. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.