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Testimony of Michael Hanson in support of HB 1018 – with an amendment

To Senate Appropriations Committee – Government Operations Division

March 8, 2023

Chairman Wanzek and members of the Committee:

I am Michael Hanson, Director of North Valley Career and Technology Center in Grafton.

I'm seeking your consideration of an amendment to support \$8 million (\$1 million per biennia per region) funding for the eight regional councils which serve communities, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and more statewide.

Created by NDCC 54-40.1 in 1973, the regional councils were to serve the purpose of establishing statewide policy for planning, economic development programs, operation, coordination and related cooperative activities of state/local governments to resolve issues and problems transcending individual jurisdictions. Yet, these organizations have not had a consistent long-term funding mechanism to meet this purpose.

In Region 4, there is a dire need to continue the work our Regional Council has accomplished these last two years, especially in the areas of workforce, childcare and housing. North Valley Career and Technology Center has partnered with the Regional Council for the past eight years to provide students (k-12) meaningful career exploration and work-based learning experiences. The connections of our Regional Council with business and industry has been maximized to provide a model for work-based learning that is being replicated by educators across the State of North Dakota in an effort to help workforce. The lack of childcare and housing in Region 4 is a real concern for attracting teachers to our schools. The good news is that in Region 4, an action plan to tackle these needs is ready to go and can only be accomplished through staff to lead.

I urge your support for increasing the rural development capacity across the state by supporting this amendment for \$8 million for the eight regional councils.