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# Golden Valley Veterinary Clinic

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## Testimony of Britt Jacobson 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 Britt Jacobson, Practice Manager for Golden Valley Veterinary Clinic, Park River, ND.

**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.

Today, our region can have a rural renaissance with the need for more than 1,500 new employees in our small towns – but only if we address the critical needs of **housing, workforce, and childcare**. In 2021/2022, we enlisted Roger Brooks, a renowned national expert on **destination development** to secret shop our region and develop an action plan that would support visitor, resident, and investment attraction to northeastern North Dakota. The plan is ready to go – it calls for six professional staff to lead – which is currently not available due to the lack of funding.

As an employer who has made a significant commitment our rural community by building a new veterinary clinic, I see the need for this type of continued economic development in our community and our region. I have staff members waiting six months to find appropriate housing. I have additional staff that are unable to work even part-time due to the lack of childcare in our region. In order to grow our business, we need to address these critical needs in order to retain

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current employees and attract future employees. Funding for the eight regional councils would help our communities be even more vibrant, healthy, and sustainable.

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.