



Matthew Marshall
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RE: **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1018**

Chair Bekkedahl and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee:

For the record, my name is Matt Marshall and I have the pleasure to serve as the economic development administrator for Minnkota Power cooperative and as a board member for EDND. In this capacity I support members and communities in Northeastern North Dakota in their efforts to attract and retain industry, develop comprehensive workforce development solutions, and enhance resiliency through community development projects.

House bill 1018 has critical elements that are desperately needed to support the ongoing growth and diversification throughout the entire state. As you know, the lack of available qualified workers is the number 1 issue facing industry in North Dakota. There is not a simple solution, nor a one-size-fits-all program that will solve this problem. The Department of Commerce programs proposed in house bill 1018 take a multi-pronged approach to this issue that tackle everything from workforce recruitment and training to revitalizing communities.

One of the innovative ideas in that multi-pronged approach is the proposed Destination Development Fund. It is proven that those who visit our state are far more likely to relocate here. The proposed Destination Development Fund will be used to create unique attractions that will create a sense of place for current North Dakota residents and attract new visitors that could one day become residents of our great state.

Though house bill 1018 is comprehensive and strategic in its approach to advancing North Dakota's economy, additional support in our rural areas is needed. Providing funding to the regional councils throughout the state would allow those organizations to develop the professional capacity needed to ensure those areas don't lose out on funding available. This would provide ongoing support for the efficient and steady growth of the regions they serve. For this reason, we ask that you amend house bill 1018 to include ongoing funding for the eight regional councils throughout the state.

Thank you for your service and dedication to the growth and prosperity of North Dakota. I respectfully ask for a Do Pass recommendation with an amendment to fund North Dakota's eight regional councils.

Sincerely,

Matthew Marshall

Economic Development Administrator

