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Testimony of Melissa Beach in Support of SB 2018
March 17, 2025

Chairman Nathe and members of the House Appropriations - Education and Environment Division,

My name is Melissa Beach, and I am the Economic Development Administrator with Minnkota Power Cooperative headquartered in Grand Forks. I also serve as Vice Chair of the Economic Development Association of North Dakota.

I'm here today to express my strong support for SB 2018, which provides funding to the Department of Commerce and its various programs. As an economic development professional serving both North Dakota and Minnesota, I have seen firsthand how the funding allocated through this bill has played a critical role in fostering economic growth and enhancing the state's business environment to make North Dakota competitive.

The North Dakota Development Fund, specifically, has been instrumental in providing businesses with the financial support they need to grow and thrive. With its ability to offer low-interest loans and flexible terms, the fund has directly contributed to the creation of successful enterprises across various industries. This program has enabled numerous businesses to overcome financial barriers that might otherwise stifle innovation and growth. Allowing this success to reach beyond those with primary sector designation would be even more beneficial, especially in rural communities.

SB 2018 supports several other initiatives, including workforce development programs, that are essential for our state's economic landscape. These initiatives are interconnected elements that create a dynamic environment for businesses and communities to flourish. These programs play a critical role in ensuring North Dakota remains a competitive player for businesses and their investments. North Dakota is struggling to stay competitive – with businesses halting expansions and considering relocations elsewhere - for many of the reasons these divisions are diligently working to solve.

In conclusion, SB 2018 represents a vital investment in North Dakota's economic future. The programming included in the bill has proven to be successful in fueling business development and sustainable economic growth. I strongly encourage the committee to support this bill, as it is essential to the continued success and vitality of our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Melissa Beach".

Melissa Beach
Economic Development Administrator
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