

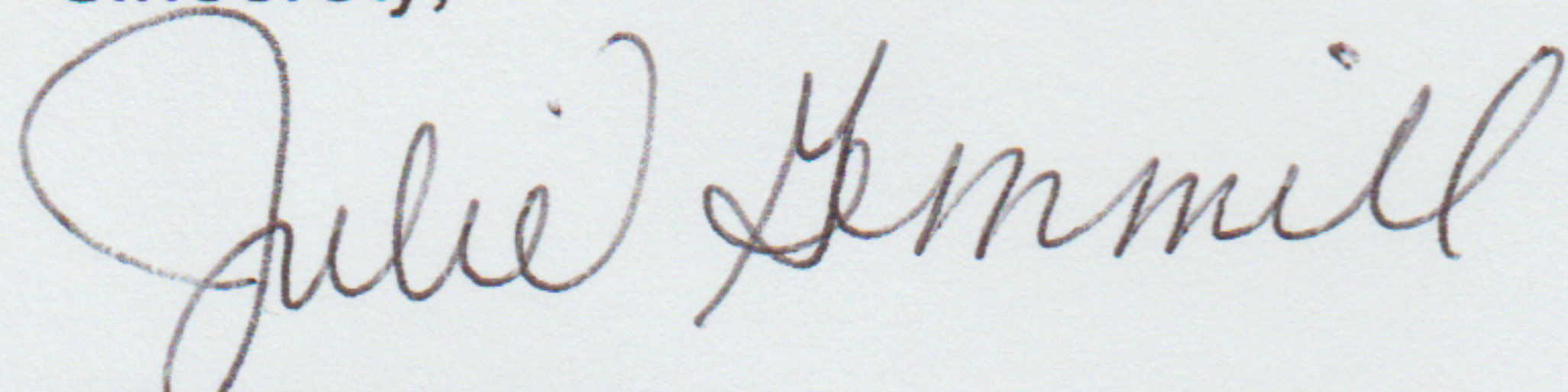
company. Potential hires want to know what it's like to work, live, and play here. This led to the creation of the state's first rural workforce attraction and retention initiative, Real. Good. Northeast ND. The regional council secured the funding and staff and in collaboration with our employers, developed this initiative that continues to grow. (www.realgoodnd.com).

- **FlexPACE:** This program has been vital to the growth and expansion of businesses in our county. The regional council has been an integral part of ensuring local lenders utilize the program. Projects the JDA provided the Community Match for in 2024 include everything from an electrician business start-up to a multi-million dollar equipment purchase at an existing value-added agriculture company.
- **Community Vibrancy:** Assisting communities and community groups across our county to access funding programs to help with projects that enhance our small towns. Examples include Kid's Alley, an indoor play space in Grafton; a pocket park on Fordville's main street; and a professional wall mural on Park River's main street.

Additionally, the JDA leverages regional council staff to serve as its full-time executive director and part-time fiscal manager. This partnership has allowed the volunteer JDA board of directors to lead and support projects it would otherwise be unable to without this economic development staff expertise. The Impact of HB 1524 would greatly help to level the playing field for smaller communities competing for state and federal resources.

In closing, I urge you to support this critical funding bill for Regional Councils statewide.

Sincerely,



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