



**2025 SB 2097**  
**House Political Subdivisions Committee**  
**Representative Donald Longmuir, Chairman**  
**March 7, 2025**

Chairman Longmuir and members of the House Political Subdivisions Committee, I am Melissa Hauer, General Counsel/VP of the North Dakota Hospital Association (NDHA). I testify in support of Senate Bill 2097 and ask that you give the bill a **Do Pass** recommendation.

Hospitals support the creation of a rural community endowment fund for rural communities in our state to support, create, or improve local housing, workforce, business recruitment and commerce, infrastructure, or other community needs. We especially appreciate that the bill prioritizes projects that support the long-term prosperity, independence, safety, health, and quality of life of rural communities and their citizens.

In rural communities, hospitals are especially important to the long-term health and economic viability of a community. Hospitals provide crucial access to health care services like emergency and primary care and also are often the primary employer and economic driver for the area, generating jobs and supporting local businesses by providing essential medical services that might not be available otherwise. This presence includes benefits like improved access to health care, economic stability, and community health initiatives addressing social determinants of health like housing and nutrition.

The bill provides that funds are available for rural communities with a population of fewer than one thousand individuals. There are a number of hospitals located in cities of that size. We envision that the funds could be used creatively by these communities to drive positive change in areas such as workforce development, affordable housing, and increasing childcare options – all of which are critical to hospitals and other businesses to attract workforce in order to operate and provide services. Investing in such critical infrastructure could also stimulate economic development through the indirect effects of such investment and resulting growth in rural communities. An endowment fund such as

the one in the bill would ensure that funds are available for rural community development into the future. We see this fund as being able to support creative, locally developed, tailored investment in the health of entire rural communities.

In summary, we thank you for your support of the rural areas of our state and ask that you give the bill a **Do Pass** recommendation. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Hauer, General Counsel/VP  
North Dakota Hospital Association