

March 7, 2025

House Political Subdivisions Committee

Chairman **Longmuir** and Committee Members,

My name is Tim Mathern, Senator from District 11 and a sponsor of SB 2097. Though I represent our largest city, Fargo, in the legislature, my roots are in one of our smallest cities, Edgeley.

This bill establishes an endowment fund, and the earnings of the fund provide grants to communities under 1000 population. The viability of our rural communities is important economically but more importantly to preserve the base of our value system. Rural North Dakota doesn't just grow corn and cattle. Hard work, self-resiliency, and cooperation are values grown in rural North Dakota. We need more of these in our country. This bill supports this environment.

To those who question the appropriation, now only \$5 million, I remind you we made a \$50 million endowment to one entity alone, the Teddy Roosevelt Presidential Library. This rural endowment serves hundreds of entities. To those who question our overall budget I remind you we are in the best position we have ever been, noted not just for my 40 years of legislative service and seat on the Appropriations Committee, but also noted from the recent addresses of Governor Burgum and Governor Armstrong. All of you will be gone from the Legislature within 6 years. I encourage you to support this bill as your legacy of stewarding our good fortune to create a bold initiative to preserve rural North Dakota forever. We are ripe to be bold and creative.

To those who say we already have organizations doing things to support rural North Dakota, I say support this bill as another tool to make a positive difference. We need more hands on the plow to prevent becoming the Buffalo Commons promoted by the famous Popper's scholarly article in 1987.

There are others here to testify to the details and I ask you to give them your attention. I ask you to put \$45 million back into the bill and a Do Pass recommendation on SB 2097.

Thank you for your service to our state.