Testimony of Laura Lacher
Economic Development Association of North Dakota
In Support of HB 1577
March 21, 2025

Chairman Patten and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Laura Lacher, executive director of the Economic Development Association of North Dakota (EDND). EDND represents economic development professionals, local and regional organizations, and community leaders dedicated to fostering business growth and infrastructure development. EDND supports this bill as a necessary investment in North Dakota's wastewater infrastructure, ensuring that communities across the state have the necessary resources to upgrade, replace, or construct wastewater systems essential for public health, economic development, and long-term growth.

Reliable and modern infrastructure is a cornerstone of economic development. Communities of all sizes depend on functioning wastewater systems to support business expansion, attract new industries, and maintain a high quality of life for residents. The creation of a wastewater infrastructure grant program will provide much-needed financial assistance to cities, counties, townships, and water districts, particularly in smaller communities that often struggle to fund these essential projects.

While we strongly support the intent of HB 1577, we respectfully request an amendment to restore the funding level to the originally proposed $50 million. The current allocation of $25 million, while a positive step, does not fully meet the demonstrated need across the state. Additional funding would ensure more communities, especially those with populations under 12,500, can access the support necessary to comply with regulations, address aging infrastructure, and prepare for future growth.

Investing in wastewater infrastructure is an investment in North Dakota's future. We urge the committee to support HB 1577 and consider restoring the original funding level to maximize its impact. Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.