

2025 HOUSE INDUSTRY, BUSINESS AND LABOR

HB 1438

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Industry, Business and Labor Committee Room JW327C, State Capitol

HB1438
1/21/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the state historical society for a historic theater restoration grant program.

2:04 p.m. Chairman Warrey opened the meeting.

Members Present: Chairman Warrey, Vice Chairman Ostlie, Vice Chairman Johnson, Representatives Bahl, Brown, Christy, Finley-DeVille, Grindberg, Kasper, Koppelman, D. Ruby, Schatz, Schauer, Vollmer

Discussion Topics:

- Fargo Theater
- Non-Profit, volunteer board
- Iconic representation
- Most photographed landmark
- Busy venue
- Film Festival
- On-time expense
- ND Historical Budget
- Downtown, economic impact
- Matching grant

2:04 p.m. Representative Karla Rose Hanson, District, Fargo, ND introduced and submitted testimony #30607.

2:12 p.m. Emily Beck, Executive Director, Fargo Theater, testified in support and submitted testimony #30605.

2:24 p.m. Patrick Kirby, Small Business Owner, West Fargo, ND submitted testimony in support #30606.

2:32 p.m. Representative Christy moved Do Pass.

2:32 p.m. Representative Grindberg seconded the motion.

2:35 p.m. Representative Christy withdrew his motion.

2:36 p.m. Representative Schauer moved to amend by adding a 2 for 1 match.

2:39 p.m. Representative Koppelman seconded the motion.

Voice vote.

Motion passed.

2:43 p.m. Representative Christy moved Do Pass as amended and rerefer to appropriations.

2:44 p.m. Representative Schauer seconded the motion.

Representatives	Vote
Representative Jonathan Warrey	Y
Representative Mitch Ostlie	Y
Representative Landon Bahl	N
Representative Collette Brown	Y
Representative Josh Christy	Y
Representative Lisa Finley-DeVile	Y
Representative Karen Grindberg	Y
Representative Jorin Johnson	Y
Representative Jim Kasper	Y
Representative Ben Koppelman	Y
Representative Dan Ruby	N
Representative Mike Schatz	N
Representative Austin Schauer	Y
Representative Daniel R. Vollmer	N

Motion passed 10-4-0

2:45 p.m. Representative Schauer will carry the bill.

Additional written testimony:

Jane Mathew, Fargo, ND, submitted testimony in support #29871.

Gregory B. Carlson, Professor and Director of Film Studies, Concordia College and North Dakota Film Society, submitted testimony in support #30133.

John Machacek, Fargo, ND submitted testimony in support #30164.

Kendra O'Brien, Fargo, ND submitted testimony in support #30166.

Lisa Edison-Smith, West Fargo, ND, submitted testimony in support #30176.

Janet H. Bandau, Moorhead, MN, submitted testimony in support #30177.

Beth Jansen, Executive Director, Cass County ND Historical Society d/b/a/ Bonanzaville USA, submitted testimony in support #30207.

Jade R. Nielsen, President/Founder, Jade Presents, LLC. submitted testimony in support #30344.

Michael Allmendinger, Kilbourne Group, submitted testimony in support #30345.

Paul H. Gleye, Leadership Team, Fargo Neighborhood Coalition, submitted testimony in support #30350

Danielle Erdmann, Fargo, ND, submitted testimony in support #30376.

Tim Flakoll, Private Citizen, Fargo, ND, submitted testimony in support #30291.

Tony Grindberg, State Director, Xcel Energy, submitted testimony in support #30270.

2:45 p.m. Chairman Warrey closed the meeting.

Diane Lillis, Committee Clerk

House Industry, Business and Labor Committee
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Diane Lillis, Committee Clerk

Sixty-ninth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO

HOUSE BILL NO. 1438

Introduced by

Representatives Hanson, Foss

Senator Boschee

JB
1-21-25
1081

1 A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the state historical society for a historic theater
2 restoration grant program.

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

4 **SECTION 1. APPROPRIATION - STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY - HISTORIC THEATER**
5 **RESTORATION GRANT PROGRAM - MATCHING FUNDS REQUIREMENT - ONE-TIME**

6 **FUNDING.** There is appropriated out of any moneys in the general fund in the state treasury,
7 not otherwise appropriated, the sum of \$1,100,000, or so much of the sum as may be
8 necessary, to the state historical society for the purpose of providing a grant to an organization
9 dedicated to the restoration of a historic theater in a city with a population of more than 100,000,
10 for the biennium beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2027. The state historical society
11 may spend the funds identified in this section only to the extent the organization has secured
12 ~~matching funds~~ one dollar in matching moneys for every two dollars from nonstate sources ~~on a~~
13 ~~dollar-for-dollar basis~~. This funding is considered a one-time funding item.

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
HB 1438**

Industry, Business and Labor Committee (Rep. Warrey, Chairman) recommends **AMENDMENTS** ([25.0565.02001](#)) and when so amended, recommends **DO PASS** and **BE REREFERRED** to the **Appropriations Committee** (10 YEAS, 4 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HB 1438 was placed on the Sixth order on the calendar.

I am Jane Mathew, and I have lived in Fargo for 37 years. I currently serve on the board for the Fargo Theater. I remember the first time I ever went to the Fargo Theater. We were invited by our neighbor, Dr. Blaine Amidon and his wife, Virginia, to go to a Silent Movie Night with them. I was overwhelmed the minute I walked in the door. The architectural style of this theater was like none other I had ever been in. I immediately fell in love with it.

Years later, I got involved with the Fargo Film Festival starting by just working the merchandise table. I enjoyed seeing the enthusiasm of real movie buffs who waited all year for the next festival. I was invited to be on a jury and from then on, I have been actively involved with the FFF and the theater. Movies that I had to review were coming in from all over the world. Film producers and directors made it a point to come to Fargo just to attend the festival. Since my first involvement with the festival, I have taken the opportunity to visit film festivals in other towns. The FFF rises above all others.

I continue to serve as a frequent volunteer usher at the theater, and I love it. I like to usher up in the balcony. I see many people coming upstairs just to catch a glimpse of what this piece of history really looks like from a bird's eye view. It's not just Fargoans coming to the Fargo Theater. The wonderful conversations and small world moments that I have experienced while ushering are many. People from all over the country come to see comedians, musical artists, plays, lectures and many more events held at the theater. This means they need a place to stay, rent a car, eat meals at local restaurants and more.

The Fargo Theater isn't just a building. It's a piece of Fargo history and an icon for downtown Fargo. It is a building located in Fargo, but it is recognized all across the state of North Dakota and the country. It can be seen in tourism ads encouraging visitors to check out what ND has to offer. As older buildings go, they always are in need of repair and some of those repairs are huge. Being a not-for-profit, resources have to be used wisely. Emily and her staff are very conscientious financially. The community is a great supporter of the theater, but more needs to be done. With the help of funding from the passing of this bill HB1438 and the opportunity to support a matching grant, families and friends can continue to enjoy the Fargo Theater for years to come.

SIDE NOTE: They have the very BEST popcorn. During Covid confinement, we ordered huge bags at a time just to enjoy it while watching a movie at home!!

Jane Mathew
1714 9th St S
Fargo, ND 58103
701-261-9777

1/20/25

Dear North Dakota Legislators,

My name is Dr. Gregory B. Carlson and I am the chair of the Communication Studies and Theatre Art department at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. I was born in North Dakota and am a North Dakota resident. I am also the co-founder of the North Dakota Film Society.

I am writing in strong support of HB 1438 for the positive good it will provide for the Fargo community and beyond. The Fargo Theatre has been an essential part of my life since my father took me to see "Star Wars" there in 1977. I am now 52 years old but hardly more than a week has gone by since my childhood that I have not visited the Fargo Theatre to see a movie.

As a building recognized on the National Register of Historic Places, the Fargo Theatre and its marquee – as instantly recognizable symbols of the community – have become well-known landmarks that appeal to locals and tourists alike.

As the Fargo Theatre approaches its centennial, the matching grant opportunity offers a sterling investment that reflects the values of maintaining historic buildings for future generations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gregory Carlson

January 20, 2025

Members of the Committee, my name is John Machacek and I am a long time member/supporter, past board member and a current volunteer of the Fargo Theatre. I am submitting this written testimony **in support of House Bill No. 1438**, which is a Bill to provide an appropriation to the state historical society for a historic theater restoration grant program.

As a facility, the Fargo Theatre is a historic and iconic structure in Fargo and the State of North Dakota. The FARGO marquee must be one of the most photographed and shared images in the state, probably right up there with photos of Medora. Visitors want to get their photos taken in front of it and it is a go-to photo backdrop for many wedding and prom parties. You see the marquee image on the walls of many area businesses and hotels. There are countless media campaigns that utilize the image. And that is just the exterior of the building!

Inside is not only the large art deco style venue that seats more than 700 people but inside is also where all the wonderful arts & culture programming and community & corporate events occur. Whether a film, festival, concert, comedy show or community event, what goes on inside the Fargo Theatre is an important part of the fabric of engaging our residents and visitors. This kind of engagement helps with the attraction and retention of our population, as well as driving considerable tourism dollars to the region.

Between my love & appreciation for the theatre, and my firsthand knowledge from being a past board member, I could go on for pages on WHY this facility and organization is so important to our region and state. However, I will use my remaining comments tied to this knowledge that not only do I know the staff and board will effectively and efficiently manage funds raised as part of this public-private funding campaign, but I'll also note that the theatre needs this investment to preserve and improve the facility. The last major renovation was in the late 1990's and with this being a century-old building, it is need of some TLC and upgrades. We do not want to see any parts of the building deteriorate and we also want to get up-to-date on some of the obsolete or near obsolete audio, visual and HVAC equipment.

Again, please accept my written letter of testimony **in support of House Bill No. 1438** to provide an appropriation to the state historical society for a historic theater restoration grant program. The ROI of the public and private investments into maintaining, restoring and improving the theatre will provide tremendous tangible and intangible value.

Thank you,
John Machacek
2625 39 ½ Ave S
Fargo, ND 58104

My name is Kendra O'Brien, and I'm writing in support of House Bill 1438.

For 98 years, the Fargo Theatre has been a shining presence at the heart of Fargo's downtown. House Bill 1438 is an investment in North Dakota's history and legacy, helping a non-profit that builds community, generates tourism dollars, and preserves the cultural heritage of our state.

When I came to Fargo in 1997, I had not seen anything like the Fargo Theatre, either in design or the independent filmmaking it showcased. The Fargo Theatre and Fargo Film Festival created a community for me that made me want to make Fargo my home after I finished my undergraduate and Master's degrees at NDSU.

The Fargo Theatre was there for my grandmother when she was an NDSU student in the 1930s, and was the site of my wedding and my son's first movie. I will be donating to the capital campaign to help keep it around in the hopes that future generations will have happy memories there too.

That the Fargo Theatre has survived for 98 years is a testament to North Dakotans willingness to work hard to preserve this valuable landmark. Please support bill 1438 to invest in the theatre's next century in downtown Fargo.

Kendra O'Brien
Fargo, ND

TESTIMONY OF LISA EDISON-SMITH IN SUPPORT OF HB1438

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

My name is Lisa Edison-Smith and I offer this testimony in support of House Bill 1438, a measure to provide funding to the North Dakota State Historical Society from which to provide a matching grant to the historic Fargo Theatre for the purpose of needed restoration to the Theatre.

The Fargo Theatre was completed in 1925 and is approaching its centennial anniversary of operations in 2026. The Fargo Theatre is a community treasure, and its marquee serves as a recognizable landmark and reminder of the rich history and contemporary vibrance not only of Fargo, but the entire state of North Dakota.

The Theatre itself is a beautiful example of art deco design and a hub of activity for the arts and events for the entire region. The building is home not only to first-run and classic films, silent movies, and the famed Fargo Film Festival, it also provides live stage and community events throughout the year.

I am a proud current Board member of the Fargo Theatre and have previously served as President of its volunteer Board. Through my work with the Fargo Theatre, I have seen first-hand the impact the organization and its dedicated staff have not just on the arts community, but the entire community of Fargo and state of North Dakota. From hosting groups of school children to corporate events, the Fargo Theatre is a vital historic and enrichment link that draws people to the state and region. It reflects both the state's history and tradition, as well as the renewed vibrance of its cities and communities.

During my time as President, the expense of preserving and maintaining such an historic architectural gem became apparent to me. Not only must funds be invested in everyday maintenance, but the Theatre must also be updated to provide enhanced and improved accessibility features to allow members of the public with mobility, audio, and visual restrictions to share in the events offered. As an example, a long-time friend and former co-worker reached out to me regarding the need for enhanced access after her husband became dependent on a wheelchair. Funding is critical to ensure that all members of the community and state are able to share in the offerings of the Fargo Theatre.

The Fargo Theatre, its truly amazing staff, and supporters are engaging in fundraising efforts to ensure that this historical treasure continues to shine and reflect the vibrancy of Fargo and all of North Dakota. HB 1438 provides appropriations for critical matching funding to allow adequate funding for the Fargo Theatre in its next century that will benefit all North Dakotans.

I encourage the Committee to pass HB 1438.

LISA EDISON-SMITH
2615 2nd ST E
WEST FARGO, ND 58078

January 20, 2025

To: House Industry, Business, and Labor Committee

From: Janet Brandau

brandaujh@gmail.com

Greetings! I'm writing to you in support of House Bill no. 1438. I live in Moorhead, Minnesota, and came to the Fargo-Moorhead area decades ago for higher education. While a graduate student in Theatre Arts at NDSU I became familiar with the Fargo Theatre and their scope of offerings. After graduation I moved away to teach for ten years, and then moved back and have been here since. When I returned to this area I became involved as a volunteer at the Fargo Theatre and the Fargo Film Festival (over 15 years now) and I am a regular donor. I'm so proud of the breadth of programming the Fargo Theatre provides for our region, and the many people who are impacted by its offerings.

Maintaining this historic landmark provides us with a continuum through time, not only in the beauty of the structure itself, but in the history of the programming and the evolution of the technology needed to provide that programming. While there are movie theatres in many locations, historic venues like this are rare. Preserving the state's cultural heritage is an important and appropriate function for the legislature. Such places tell people who *we* are. The Fargo Theatre's programming tells people of all ages that they are welcome here. That there is a place offering a multitude of kinds of programming reflecting the region and the world. That our history is valued and we honor it while we preserve it for the future.

The return on investment in preserving this theatre is solid. It will continue to attract both residents and tourists to downtown and the broader region. It will continue to support the arts, entertainment, education, and the world of film through its programming. As a non-profit, the Fargo Theatre relies not only on ticket revenue but on the support of donors. The public-private model for this funding is a positive, demonstrating wide support for this iconic North Dakota landmark.

Thank you for considering this bill. I strongly encourage you to vote in favor of this investment. North Dakota's history and culture are important- this a rare moment in time (with the theatre's 100th anniversary approaching) to commit to preservation of a treasure and to launch it into its next 100 years. Thank you for reading and thank you for your support.



1351 West Main Avenue West
Fargo, ND 58078-0719
701-282-2822
Bonanzaville.org

1/20/2025

Dear Sir or Madame,

Historic sites serve as concrete reminders of North Dakota's past and our shared history. They form the foundation for strong and resilient communities. Once North Dakota's historic buildings are destroyed, they cannot be replaced; they are lost forever. Historic theaters from the early 20th century display classic architectural work by some of the most renowned architects of their time, often featuring innovative and ornate designs. Communities recognize their historic theaters' social and economic value, accepting them as integral pieces of their identity. Pittsburgh, Minneapolis, Cleveland, and New York City illustrate the positive outcomes that can arise when historic theaters are preserved and professionally managed, contributing to the quality of life in those cities and the economic benefits from their operations. The Fargo Theater, one of these amazing treasures, will have the same benefits for the City of Fargo and the State of North Dakota. For these reasons, I wholeheartedly support the initiative.

Thank you,

Beth Jansen

Executive Director



P.O. Box 2747
Fargo, ND 58108

January 21, 2025

The Honorable Jonathan Warrey
Chairman, House Industry, Business & Labor Committee
North Dakota State Legislature
Bismarck, ND 58059

RE: Support for HB 1438

Dear Chairman Warrey and Members of the IBL Committee,

I am writing to express Xcel Energy's support for HB 1438 to provide match funding to sustain and enhance the Fargo Theatre, one of North Dakota's most iconic cultural landmarks and an integral part of North Dakota's identity. Please know that Xcel Energy was the first business to make a private financial investment to the 2026 public/private capital campaign.

Since its opening in 1926, the Fargo Theatre has stood as a beacon of arts, culture, and community in North Dakota. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this beautifully restored Art Deco treasure is more than a movie theater—it is a gathering place that brings people together to celebrate film, live performances, and cultural experiences that enrich the lives of residents and visitors alike.

As a major economic driver, the Fargo Theatre attracts thousands of visitors each year, contributing significantly to the local and state economy. It serves as a hub for cultural tourism, supporting nearby businesses and fostering a vibrant downtown Fargo. Events like the Fargo Film Festival draw participants and audiences from across the region, boosting hospitality, dining, and retail industries.

Despite its enduring success, the Fargo Theatre requires continued investment to maintain its historic structure and expand its programming capabilities. Funding from the North Dakota Legislature would support critical facility upgrades, preservation efforts, and operational needs, ensuring the Theatre remains a cornerstone of culture and community for future generations.

Your support would not only preserve a beloved landmark but also affirm the state's commitment to fostering cultural heritage, economic growth, and community well-being. I respectfully urge the committee to allocate funding to the Fargo Theatre, recognizing its invaluable contributions to North Dakota's past, present, and future.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and dedication to supporting the arts in our state. Please feel free to contact me at 701.261.4691 or tony.s.grindberg@xcelenergy.com if I can provide additional information or assistance.

Sincerely,

Tony Grindberg

Xcel Energy
State Director, ND

HB 1438

January 21, 2025

Chairman Warrey

Vice Chairman Ostlie,

and Honorable members of the House Industry Business and Labor Committee - Landon Bahl, Josh Christy, Jayme Davis, Gretchen Dobervich, Karen Grindberg, Jorin Johnson, Jim Kasper, Ben Koppelman, Dan Ruby, Mike Schatz, Austen Schauer, and Daniel R. Vollmer.

I am Tim Flakoll, writing you as a private citizen of North Dakota encouraging your **support for HB 1438** which seeks funding for the historic Fargo Theatre that opened 100 years ago.

The Fargo Theatre is a high-use facility located in historic downtown Fargo. It hosts cinema (including many independent first-run films) and serves as a live event venue. I drive past it every day on the way to work and am always amazed at the frequency and breadth of offerings they provide to people of all ages in our region.

I have personally participated in countless events and performances at the art deco facility. It is not just an important part of our past, but will **play a vital role in our future.**

In recent years I have seen great movies from Classic Movie Series movies such as Cassablanca to the Sound of Music. I have used it to host and have participated in Downtown Community Partnership events, agriculture roundtables, patriotic events and to hear keynote talks from some of America's best speakers.

I have seen performances ranging from comedian Charlie Berens, to singers Clint Black, and the Blenders, to Black Jacket Symphony – Led Zeppelin. It truly has something for everyone and brings in people from within 150 miles or more to North Dakota, helping to fill our hotels and restaurants.

The marquee of the Fargo Theatre is said to be the most photographed place in the metro and those images have **brought coast to coast positive recognition to North Dakota** in print, TV and social media.

I have served on the Fargo Film Festival committee which is held every March since 2001. The festival has accepted submissions from independent filmmakers from more than 35 states and 20 countries making it a go-to destination. One of this year's featured guests will be Molly Ringwall, famous iconic films such as "Sixteen Candles", "Pretty in Pink" and "The Breakfast Club." Other multi-generational activities include their kid's movie series which provides kids and their families with affordable fun.

The Theatre is nine years older than the North Dakota State Capitol. Much like the capitol, it is amazing, but it needs refurbishment (plumbing, HVAC, lighting, projectors, seats, etc.) from its original environment in order to best serve the people of North Dakota. Please consider providing funds which can be used to help leverage private donations in order to help keep it as a **pearl on the prairie and a source of pride for all North Dakotans.**

Tim Flakoll

Tim Flakoll

Past State Senator (1998-2016)

Past President Pro Tempore of the Senate

Cass County Commissioner

Past Chairman – Downtown Community Partnership



Dear Members of the North Dakota Legislature,

I am writing as a longtime resident and business owner in North Dakota to express my strong support for HB 1438. Having lived in several communities throughout the state—Fargo, Grand Forks, Bismarck, and Valley City—I have seen firsthand the critical need to preserve and support our historic buildings and cultural landmarks.

In each of these towns, the historic theatres and buildings are not just structures; they are vital hubs of activity, cultural identity, and economic vitality. Maintaining these buildings is an ongoing challenge, especially as the cost of doing business continues to rise. For many of us, keeping a century-old building in good condition requires significant resources, but it's an investment in preserving the fabric of our communities.

Take, for example, the Fargo Theatre. Beyond being a cherished landmark, it is a community treasure—an arts and entertainment center, a movie house, and a gathering place for people of all ages. The Fargo Theatre is a symbol of downtown Fargo's vitality, drawing visitors and residents alike to experience the magic of live performances, films, and community events.

But it's not just the Fargo Theatre that needs our attention. Historic theatres and buildings across our state play an essential role in the cultural and economic life of our towns and cities. They are irreplaceable assets that require ongoing support and investment to stay viable.

I urge you to support HB 1438 and help ensure that these important pieces of our state's heritage remain standing for future generations.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jade Nielsen
Jade Presents, LLC



January 20, 2025

Chair Warrey and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Kilbourne Group, I am writing to express our dedicated support for House Bill No. 1438, which would provide a matching grant to support the Fargo Theatre's Centennial Capital Campaign.

The Fargo Theatre has been a cornerstone of downtown Fargo for nearly a century, playing an integral role in the cultural and economic vibrancy of our community. Kilbourne Group has experienced this partnership firsthand, particularly through our collaboration on the 300 Broadway project. The Theatre's vision for a second screen was instrumental in shaping this development, and the resulting Theatre 2 has become a profound asset to the Fargo Theatre and the downtown environment as a whole. This collaboration highlights how historic preservation, and forward-thinking development can work hand-in-hand to benefit the entire community.

Beyond our shared projects, the Fargo Theatre is a critical component of what makes downtown Fargo a desirable place to live, work, and play. Its programming and iconic presence contribute to the vitality of the district, supporting businesses, attracting residents, and fostering a sense of community that aligns with Kilbourne Group's mission to create spaces where people feel connected and inspired.

House Bill No. 1438 represents a unique opportunity to invest in this historic landmark while leveraging private support to maximize impact. As a business that has benefited from the Theatre's role in revitalizing downtown Fargo, we encourage your support of this important legislation.

Thank you for considering this investment in one of North Dakota's most cherished cultural assets.

Sincerely,

Mike Allmendinger
President



Office: 701.237-2279
210 Broadway, Suite 300 | Fargo, ND 58102
kilbournegroup.com | [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/kilbournegroup) | [Twitter](https://twitter.com/kilbournegroup)

Vibrant downtowns create smart, healthy cities.



The Fargo Neighborhood Coalition, an organization representing the residents of Fargo's core neighborhoods, strongly supports the passage of HB 1438, which will provide funds to preserve and maintain the historic Fargo Theatre.

Among the two most enduring symbols of North Dakota are the Badlands in the west and the Fargo Theatre in the east – especially its iconic marquee. When the national media features North Dakota, the Fargo Theatre often symbolizes the state. It hosts feature films and live performances from nationwide performers, and it attracts visitors from around the region who support local businesses. The annual Fargo Film Festival brings regional and international visitors who support the North Dakota economy. In these and other ways, the Fargo Theatre greatly contributes to the quality of life unique to North Dakota.

Maintaining the Fargo Theatre is an expensive proposition despite the ongoing and generous support of local residents and businesses. Passage of HB 1438 will assure that the Fargo Theatre will continue to make a vital contribution to the state and region. The Fargo Neighborhood Coalition urges the North Dakota Legislature to pass HB 1438 for the benefit all of North Dakotans.

Fargo Neighborhood Coalition executive team,
Zoë Absey
Danielle Erdmann
Jay Nelson
Paul Gleye

farneighbourhoodcoalition@gmail.com

DANIELLE L. ERDMANN

1 (916) 320-8118 • erdmann@gmail.com

Dear House Representatives,

I am writing to you as a Fargo Theatre Board Member in support of HB-1438.

The Fargo Theatre is one of my favorite places in the world. It is part of the foundation of my youth. After we moved to Fargo from Minot in 1988, my mother worked at Dakota Hospital. Every December, Dakota put on a holiday event where staff performed for audience members. I had a huge crush on an orderly and I can still picture myself sitting in the fourth row on the side watching him perform. All throughout high school, I went to movies at the Fargo Theatre. My favorite movie for years was Shine, which I saw while sitting in the balcony with a friend from Shanley.

I left for Northeastern University in 1999 and loved a local, independent theatre in Boston while I lived there, but Fargo's historic theatre has always been my favorite. Every time I was home for the holidays, I would make sure to see as many movies as I could at the Fargo Theatre. I had the iconic poster in my dorm room of Moscow, London, Paris and Fargo and people would come to my room and say "oh, you're from Fargo?" Through that poster with the seminal Fargo Theatre marquee, they recognized Fargo.

Twenty-five years later, I have moved back to Fargo and am pleased to serve as a Board Member for the Theatre. My friends fly to Fargo to visit me and they always want to see the Fargo Theatre in person. It is an icon for people from all over. Since moving back, I have attended dozens of community events at the Fargo Theatre. It is a welcoming space for people to meet.

The most important aspect to me is that the Fargo Theatre is a great investment for the state. It is a nonprofit that drives the North Dakotan economy. I have had friends fly in to Fargo, attend an event at the Fargo Theatre and then take off from here to see the rest of our beautiful state. They are impressed with the history of the Theatre. Knowing that our legislature is in support of the theatre is inspiring.

Thank you for your support of HB-1438!

Regards,

Danielle L. Erdmann

Testimony in Support of House Bill No. 1438

Presented by Emily Beck, Executive Director, Fargo Theatre

Good afternoon, Chairman Warry, members of the committee, my name is Emily Beck. I'm a lifelong North Dakota resident and for the last 13 years, I've had the pleasure of serving as Executive Director of the Fargo Theatre.

Nestled in the heart of downtown Fargo, the Fargo Theatre has been lighting up Broadway and igniting imaginations for nearly 99 years. This historic landmark is more than just a local icon; it is a thriving hub of arts and entertainment and a cornerstone of our city's cultural and economic vitality. Every year, the Fargo Theatre welcomes approximately 80,000 guests through its doors, drawing visitors from across North Dakota and beyond.

The Fargo Theatre is a critical economic driver for downtown Fargo. Studies show that for every dollar spent on an arts ticket, an additional \$3-\$4 is spent in the surrounding community—on dining, shopping, parking, and lodging. With an estimated economic impact of over \$5 million annually, the Fargo Theatre directly contributes to the vibrancy and growth of Fargo's downtown businesses, from locally owned restaurants to boutique retailers.

When the Theatre first opened in 1926 as a silent cinema and Vaudeville house, it quickly became a gathering place where residents could connect, celebrate, and create memories. Nearly a century later, the Fargo Theatre has maintained this legacy while expanding its role to meet the diverse needs of our modern community.

Incorporated as a nonprofit in 1983, the Fargo Theatre underwent a major renovation in 1998, restoring its iconic art deco architecture and fixtures. In 2009, we added a second auditorium, a strategic investment that increased programming opportunities and allowed us to reach even more audiences. Today, the Fargo Theatre operates as both a cinema and a live event venue, offering a vibrant mix of independent films, live performances, and community events.

Our slate of programming reflects the diversity of our community. As the only art house cinema in the region, we specialize in independent, international, and critically acclaimed films. We are also proud to produce the annual Fargo Film Festival, now in its 25th year, which is the largest media arts festival in the Dakotas and a significant tourism driver.

As a live event venue, we host a wide variety of performances, including productions by local arts organizations like the Fargo-Moorhead Symphony Orchestra and the F-M Ballet. Our longstanding partnership with Jade Presents has brought professional touring musicians, comedians, and dance companies to the Fargo Theatre stage, drawing sell-out crowds and energizing our community.

But our reach goes beyond entertainment. The Fargo Theatre is a symbol of Fargo's identity and a catalyst for connection. Every year, we welcome thousands of students for field trips, where history comes alive on the big screen. Our marquee, named the "most photographed location in Fargo" by Forum Communications, serves as a beacon for our city, appearing in tourism commercials, celebrity selfies, and even ESPN Game Day broadcasts.

In celebration of the Fargo Theatre's upcoming centennial, we are conducting a capital campaign to fund projects that are critical to the organization's ability to serve the community. These projects fit into two primary areas of focus: preservation of the historic facility and production technology improvements. Specific expenses include large-scale HVAC and plumbing projects, seating replacement, and upgrading the Theatre's 30-year-old audio, lighting, staging infrastructure.

The Fargo Theatre is more than a venue—it's a vital part of our community's cultural and economic ecosystem. The opportunity presented by House Bill No. 1438 will ensure that this historic landmark can continue to evolve and thrive as we approach our centennial. The one-time matching grant proposed in this bill is a transformative investment that will multiply private contributions, amplifying the impact of every dollar raised. This funding will not only preserve an important piece of North Dakota's history but also secure the Theatre's future as a driver of economic growth, tourism, and community engagement.

With your support, we can honor the Fargo Theatre's legacy while positioning it for another century of service to the people of North Dakota. Thank you for considering this critical investment in one of our state's most beloved cultural assets.

Testimony in Support of House Bill No. 1438
Presented by Patrick Kirby

Chairman Warry, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today in support of House Bill No. 1438. My name is Patrick Kirby, I'm a small business owner from West Fargo, and my day job is working with nonprofit organizations across North Dakota and the Midwest to raise funds. For over twenty years, I've had the privilege of helping organizations and communities leverage opportunities like this matching grant to transform their most beloved spaces into thriving hubs of culture, history, and economic vitality.

The matching grant proposed in House Bill No. 1438 is a proven strategy that creates momentum, inspires generosity, and energizes campaigns like the Fargo Theatre's Centennial Capital Campaign. Matching grants work because they double the impact of every dollar raised, signaling to donors that their contributions will go even further. In my two decades of fundraising experience, matches like this one are catalytic—they not only accelerate the number of gifts being donated, but also bring new supporters to the table, creating a ripple effect of community investment.

This body has a long and proud history of supporting iconic and historic projects across North Dakota. From restoring landmarks to funding cultural assets, you have recognized the value these projects bring to our communities. The Fargo Theatre is no exception. Its presence in downtown Fargo has been a cornerstone of our state's cultural identity for nearly a century. A matching grant for the Theatre aligns perfectly with your legacy of preserving history while investing in the future.

But the Fargo Theatre is more than a historic building—it's a place where memories are made and communities come together. For me, those memories include one of the amazing moments of my life as a parent: watching my daughter dance on the Fargo Theatre stage.

I sat in that historic auditorium, surrounded by neighbors, friends, and strangers, all brought together to watch our kids dance their heart out on a stage that was 90 years older than them. And let me tell you, it's a lot better than watching similar programs in a loud gymnasium. And their popcorn is better too.

That's the power of the Fargo Theatre. It's not just a venue to see classic and new release movies or your favorite band or comedian; it's a living, breathing symbol of who we are and what we value as North Dakotans.

As we approach the Theatre's centennial, the timing of this matching grant couldn't be more significant. It's an opportunity to honor the Theatre's history while ensuring it remains a vibrant part of our future. With your support, the Fargo Theatre can continue to inspire, connect, and energize our community for the next 100 years.

Thank you for considering this investment in one of North Dakota's most cherished cultural treasures. I urge you to recommend a DO PASS of House Bill No. 1438 and help ensure that the Fargo Theatre remains a beacon of art, history, community – and dance recitals - for generations to come.

Patrick Kirby
816 16th Ave Ct W
West Fargo, ND 58078
District 13

Testimony for HB 1438 Historic Preservation Grant for the Fargo Theatre

**from Rep. Karla Rose Hanson
for the House Industry, Business & Labor Committee on 1/21/25**

Chairman Warrey and members of the House IBL Committee,

My name is Rep. Karla Rose Hanson. Today, along with my two colleagues who represent District 44, I am bringing to you House Bill 1438. This bill would provide an appropriation to the ND Historical Society for a matching grant to restore the historic Fargo Theatre.

The Fargo Theatre is a treasure. It was placed on the National Register for Historic Places by the US Department of the Interior, AND it is one of the hottest attractions in Fargo.

The theater is an iconic representation of Fargo's vibrant downtown. Visitors don't miss the chance to take photos in front of this beautiful theater and its classic marquee. In fact, it's one of the most photographed landmarks in North Dakota. The interior of the theater is a stunning example of art deco style.

The Fargo Theatre is a busy venue for new-release movies and live events such as concerts, ballet productions and comedy shows. A major highlight every year is the Fargo Film Festival, a 5-day event featuring more than 100 films and 40+ visiting filmmakers. The theater also hosts 8 specialty film festivals each year, plus dozens of private events for businesses and non-profits and dozens of field trips for students. Each year, the Fargo Theatre attracts about 80,000 visitors in total.


Next year, the Fargo Theatre will celebrate its 100th birthday. To mark this milestone, a capital campaign is being planned to refurbish this historic building and update its production equipment. The Fargo Theatre, which is a non-profit organization, plans to raise \$5.5 million for this project. This appropriation request of \$1.1 million represents 20% of that goal and requires a 1:1 match from private donors. This is a one-time appropriation, not an ongoing expense.

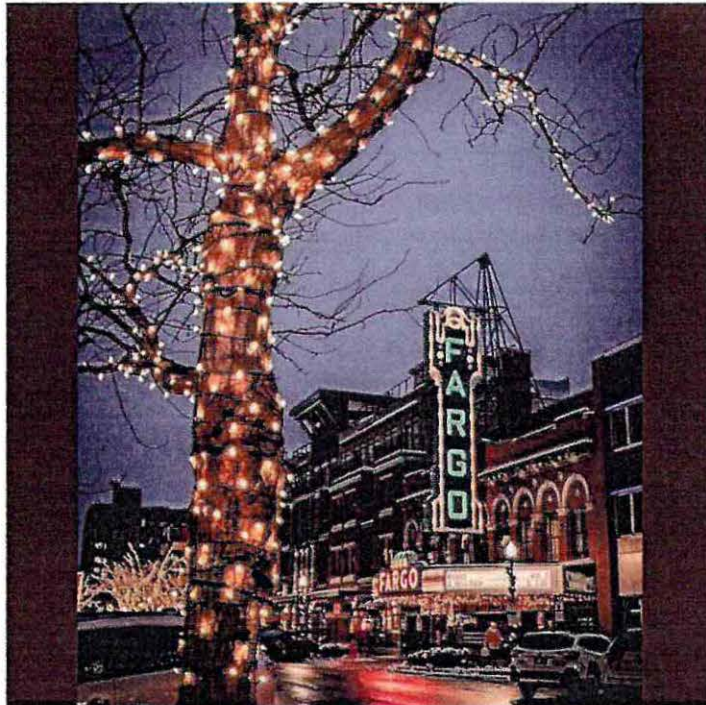
This matching grant to the Fargo Theatre will serve as a catalyst for private donations to maximize the impact of the capital campaign. The state's investment in preserving this architectural gem will ensure it continues to be a treasure in our state for years to come, continuing to spark community pride, economic activity and arts programming.

The North Dakota Historical Society budget is being heard in the E&E section of House Appropriations now. My ask of this committee is to give HB 1438 a do-pass recommendation so it can be forwarded to our section and be considered in the context of the other requests from the Historical Society, including other potential historical preservation grants.

I have invited Emily Beck, the executive director of the Fargo Theatre, to testify today to go into detail about this historic landmark, the need to refurbish the building and update its production equipment, the events it hosts, and the exciting future possibilities with the state's assistance of its 100th birthday capital campaign.

In closing, please give HB 1438 a do-pass recommendation and re-referral to the E&E section of Appropriations for additional consideration. Thank you!

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2025 HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS

HB 1438

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Appropriations Committee Roughrider Room, State Capitol

HB 1438
2/13/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the state historical society for a historic theater restoration grant program.

10:49 a.m. Chairman Vigesaa called the meeting to order.

Members Present: Chairman Vigesaa, Vice Chairman Kempenich, Representatives Anderson, Berg, Bosch, Brandenburg, Fisher, Hanson, Louser, Martinson, Meier, Mitskog, Monson, Murphy, Nathe, Nelson, O'Brien, Pyle, Richter, Sanford, Stemen, Swiontek, Wagner

Discussion Topics:

- Historic Building
- Restoration
- Production Equipment

10:49 a.m. Representative Nathe introduced the Bill.

10:59 a.m. Chairman Vigesaa closed the meeting.

Sierra Schartz, Committee Clerk

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Appropriations Committee Roughrider Room, State Capitol

HB 1438
2/21/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the state historical society for a historic theater restoration grant program.

12:08 p.m. Chairman Vigesaa opened the meeting.

Members Present: Chairman Vigesaa, Vice Chairman Kempenich, Representatives Anderson, Berg, Bosch, Brandenburg, Fisher, Hanson, Louser, Martinson, Meier, Mitskog, Monson, Murphy, Nathe, Nelson, O'Brien, Pyle, Richter, Sanford, Stemen, Swiontek, Wagner

Discussion Topics:

- Committee Action

12:08 p.m. Representative Hanson moved a Do Not Pass.

12:08 p.m. Representative Nathe seconded the motion.

12:09 p.m. Roll Call Vote

Representatives	Vote
Representative Don Vigesaa	Y
Representative Keith Kempenich	Y
Representative Bert Anderson	Y
Representative Mike Berg	Y
Representative Glen Bosch	Y
Representative Mike Brandenburg	Y
Representative Jay Fisher	Y
Representative Karla Rose Hanson	Y
Representative Scott Louser	Y
Representative Bob Martinson	Y
Representative Lisa Meier	Y
Representative Alisa Mitskog	Y
Representative David Monson	Y
Representative Eric J. Murphy	Y
Representative Mike Nathe	Y
Representative Jon O. Nelson	Y
Representative Emily O'Brien	Y
Representative Brandy L. Pyle	Y
Representative David Richter	Y
Representative Mark Sanford	Y
Representative Gregory Stemen	Y
Representative Steve Swiontek	Y

Representative Scott Wagner	Y
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12:09 p.m. Motion passed 23-0-0.

12:09 p.m. Representative Hanson will carry.

12:10 p.m. Chairman Vigesaa adjourned the meeting.

Krystal Eberle for Risa Berube, Committee Clerk

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
ENGROSSED HB 1438 ([25.0565.03000](#))**

Appropriations Committee (Rep. Vigesaa, Chairman) recommends **DO NOT PASS** (23 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). HB 1438 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar.