

**2025 HOUSE HUMAN SERVICES**

**HB 1548**

# 2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Human Services Committee Pioneer Room, State Capitol

HB 1548  
1/28/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the department of health and human services for a fitness center grant at the life skills and transition center.

2:54 p.m. Chairman M. Ruby opened the hearing.

Members Present: Chairman M. Ruby, Vice-Chairman Frelich, Representatives Anderson, Beltz, Bolinske, Davis, Fegley, Hendrix, Holle, Kiefert, Rios, Rohr

Members Absent: Representative Dobervich

### **Discussion Topics:**

- Remodel costs for Grafton Skills and Transition Center
- Amendments to fund for facility condition assessment

2:55 p.m. Representative Monson, District 19, introduced the bill.

3:00 p.m. Kristi Henriksen Wilfahrt testified in favor and submitted testimony, #32169.

3:08 p.m. William Dahl, Director of Grafton Parks and Recreation, testified in favor and submitted testimony, #31937.

3:13 p.m. Alan O'Neil, CEO of Unity Medical Center, testified in favor and submitted testimony, #31979.

3:16 p.m. Matthew Viscito, Chief Medical Officer of Unity Medical Center, testified in favor and submitted testimony, #32028.

3:19 p.m. Representative Anderson, District 19, testified in favor on behalf of Vonda Collette, Secretary of Darryl Collette Family Farm Inc. and submitted testimony in favor, #32013.

3:24 p.m. Dawn Mandt, Executive Director of Red River Regional Council, testified in favor and submitted testimony, #32189.

### **Additional written testimony:**

Kirstin Dvorak, Executive Director of The Arc of North Dakota, submitted testimony in opposition, #31959.

Jennifer Dusek, Community Development Director of the City of Grafton, submitted testimony in favor, #32021.

Chad Ruzicka, Facilities Director of the Grafton Public Schools, submitted testimony, in favor, #32247.

3:31 p.m. Chairman M. Ruby closed the hearing.  
*Jackson Toman, Committee Clerk*

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 1548**

January 24, 2025

**Chairman Matthew Ruby and Members of the Human Services Committee:**

Good afternoon. My name is Bill Dahl, and I serve as the Director of Grafton Parks and Recreation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 1548.

The need for this new facility in our community is clear. The State-owned and -run Collette Fitness Center has served the region for 57 years. While it has been a valuable resource, the facility is aging out and no longer meets the needs of modern users. As Director of Grafton Parks and Recreation, I have been approached twice by the Life Skills and Transition Center (LSTC) to take over operations of the Collette Fitness Center. However, the challenges posed by its outdated infrastructure highlight the urgent need for a new solution.

This project represents a collaborative effort involving the Grafton Park Board, City of Grafton, private donors, and the State of North Dakota. The State's participation is a critical component, not only in advancing this project but also in ensuring it serves the future needs of the LSTC. Over the past 16 years, Grafton Parks and Recreation has partnered with the State to repurpose nearly 100 acres of LSTC property, demonstrating our ability to create community assets while significantly reducing LSTC's footprint on the State budget.

By supporting House Bill 1548, you are ensuring that the needs of the LSTC and the broader community are met now and into the future. I respectfully urge you to approve this critical funding and help us bring this transformative project to fruition.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Bill Dahl

Director, Grafton Parks and Recreation



**House Human Services  
HB 1548  
January 28, 2025**

Chairperson Rep. Ruby and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kirsten Dvorak, and I represent The Arc of North Dakota, an organization dedicated to promoting and protecting the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). For 65 years, we have advocated for inclusive services that empower individuals with disabilities to live meaningful, independent lives in their communities.

I am submitting this written testimony to express our opposition to House Bill 1548, which allocates \$10 million to build a fitness center at the Life Skills and Transition Center (LSTC). While the goal of enhancing recreational opportunities for individuals with disabilities is commendable, we believe this funding would be better spent on supporting broader community inclusion efforts.

The recent census shows that LSTC serves fewer than 50 residents with access to amenities, including a pool area. Building a new fitness center would duplicate resources for a small population instead of addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities throughout the state.

The Arc of North Dakota strongly supports community integration as a cornerstone of modern disability services. Investing in inclusive, community-based fitness and recreational facilities would create equitable opportunities for individuals with disabilities while encouraging full social participation. The proposed funding for an institution-based facility contradicts this vision and diverts resources from initiatives that could benefit a broader audience. We respectfully urge the committee to reconsider the allocation of funds in House Bill 1548 and instead prioritize investments that promote community inclusion and support for individuals with disabilities throughout North Dakota.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Kirsten Dvorak  
Executive Director  
The Arc of North Dakota  
701-222-1854



**164 WEST 13 STREET  
GRAFTON, ND 58237**

**MISSION STATEMENT:**

**UNITY MEDICAL CENTER PROVIDES ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTH CARE FOR THE REGION**

**Testimony of Alan O'Neil in support of HB-1548**

**To the House Human Services Committee**

**Tuesday, January 28, 2025 – 3 pm**

Representative Ruby and members of the Human Services Committee.

My name is Alan O'Neil. I serve as the Chief Executive Officer of Unity Medical Center in Grafton, North Dakota. UMC consists of a Critical Access Hospital along with 2 Primary Care Clinics. I also serve on the North Dakota Hospital Association Board (Past Chair) and on the American Hospital Association Region 6 Policy Board (which includes 6 states - ND, Minn., SD, Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri). The RPB meets quarterly and convenes annually in Washington D.C. to provide input to the AHA National Board on all matters regarding healthcare across the United States.

This bill was introduced by Representative Monson, Anderson, Christianson, Frelich, Sanford, Mitskog, O'Brien, Osowski, Murphy and Senators, Meyer and Myrdal.

I support House Bill 1548. A key strategy of all healthcare organizations nationwide is to promote/encourage activities which result in healthier individuals and healthier communities. This is an integral part of our Community Health Needs Assessment – which is a published study required of all public hospitals participating in the Medicare Program.

Population Health is a primary driver in healthcare these days. According to the AHA, two key components for improved Overall Community Health are driven by:

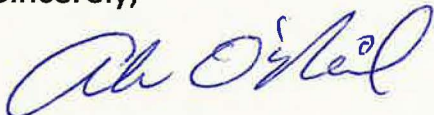
1. Physical and Mental Health
2. Social and/or Spiritual Well-being

Exercise on a consistent basis in a welcoming, contemporary environment will yield a Healthier Community. Obesity, Diabetes, Hypertension, Cardiac Conditions, Orthopedic Stress can all be minimized by a regular exercise routine. Unfortunately, North Dakota has a narrow window of weather supportive for many outdoor exercise activities. A shared indoor facility that welcomes the special needs of residents of the Life Skills and Transition Center, plus the community/region around Grafton would be an absolute win-win! Wouldn't it be great to hear testimony that the new Fitness Center has increased "physical activity" and reduced the "screen time" in our community!

Earlier in my career, I worked at the community hospital in Fairbanks, Alaska. I remember consistent winter temperatures in the minus 40 to minus 50 range. They had a "Fitness Center" such as the one being proposed. It was a "center" of the community and was very well utilized by residents of all ages. No matter the weather outside, the parking lot was always full!

This investment could very well be a "Pilot" for other North Dakota communities. Professionally speaking, recruitment in healthcare, along with other industries, is very competitive. We basically compete against all locations in the U.S. - most with much more moderate climates. Having a contemporary indoor Fitness Center would be a wonderful offering (recruiting tool) to potential candidates and their families. Thank you for your vision and support of HB – 1548.

Sincerely,



Alan O'Neil, MBA  
Chief Executive Officer  
Unity Medical Center  
Grafton, North Dakota 58237

[aoneil@unitymedcenter.com](mailto:aoneil@unitymedcenter.com)

Telephone: 701-741-4702

Greetings:

My name is Vonda Collette and I have been a resident of Grafton for 37 years and a North Dakota resident my entire life. I am writing in support of House Bill 1548 and respectfully ask you to consider supporting this bill. My husband and I are currently the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of our farm family operation and are in the process of transitioning the 4<sup>th</sup> generation to take over. All three of our children, their spouses and 9 grandchildren reside in this community as well as my mother and mother-in-law. Small town and rural living has some amazing benefits but it is time for rural areas to expect more for ourselves and our quality of life! What are the things that we can do to ensure quality of life for our existing residents as well as attract new people to our corner of the state to discover what rural has to offer? In my opinion we need to start offering facilities, programming and services that will benefit people of all ages. A regional wellness center would do that for our area.

While I am grateful that every generation of my family has had the Collette Fitness Center and the Grafton Community Pool as an option to utilize, both of those facilities under their current conditions have some limitations and are in need of serious upgrades. This testimony is my personal insight as to why I am passionate about what a regional wellness center could mean for the Northeast corner of North Dakota. Below is a list of bullet points and concerns that I have that prohibit people from utilizing the Collette Fitness Center in its current condition.

- Lack of privacy in the locker room areas is a huge concern for most people. The days of community showering and undressing in front of strangers in my mind are over.
- There is no zero entry access to the current pool which inhibits my own mother and all elderly people as well as anyone with a physical disability to enter and exit the pool safely. A pool with zero entry access is also at the very top of the wish list for my daughter and daughter-in-laws with young infants and toddlers.
- There are very limited hours for public use of the Collette Fitness pool
- The bathrooms in the main lobby of that facility are in need of updates
- There is very little natural light which is important for mood and aesthetic appearances
- The tunnels that are available to the public for walking are not well lit, there is often times water puddles on the floor from leaking pipes/ceilings, the floors are made of concrete so when it is wet it is also slippery and unsafe as well as not the ideal surface to walk on. You also have to be able to navigate steps to access the tunnels for the public.

My personal reasons to be passionate about the idea of a regional wellness facility are for my family and the many young families who have chosen to come back to rural and set their roots down. I also have two young grandsons who are diagnosed with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis and I know that they would benefit greatly by having a year round facility to receive water therapy. Currently they have to drive at least 50 miles one way to receive this type of treatment. My 85 year old mother and I also suffer from arthritis and stiff joints and we always feels so much better after we have been able to go to the pool to do our exercises. An indoor aquatics facility with the right partners and the potential to offer water therapy services is not only a medical need for my family it is a daily quality of life need for so many people!

The community of Grafton, ND has so many positive things happening right now. We have a state of the art addition to our medical center, a beautiful school, a performing arts center, a regional vocational center, an excellent and well utilized campground and park, new retail businesses, our life skills and transition center, and so much more. The timing for a project such as this seems right. The people of Northeast North Dakota are ready, waiting and expecting a better quality of life with amenities closer to home! Help us make this dream a reality with your support.

Respectfully,

Vonda Collette





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PO Box 578 | 5 East 4<sup>th</sup> St | Grafton, ND 58237  
Phone: 701.352.2730 | Fax: 701.352.2730 | TDD: 701.352.1411

### **Testimony of Jennifer Dusek in support of HB 1548**

To House Human Services Committee - Government Operations Division

Tuesday, January 28, 2025

Representative Ruby and members of the Human Services Committee:

I am Jennifer Dusek, Community Development Director for the City of Grafton. I'm seeking your consideration to support HB 1548 Act to provide an appropriation to the department of health and human services for a fitness center grant.

This type of grant would provide the opportunity of collaboration with local businesses, healthcare programming, and schools. The largest age groups among Grafton residents are children aged 5-to-9, late-career seniors aged 50-to 69, and elderly residents above age 85. We have an aging demographic who are a primary target market for fitness related programs. Birth rates in Walsh County are above average, signaling population vitality. However, we must retain those families as they are necessary workers, students, and community members. To attract and maintain a young workforce, we must provide necessary health, wellness, and recreation opportunities to remain competitive with larger metros.

A wellness center can help reduce the burden on local healthcare facilities by providing preventative care and wellness programs. It can serve to increase tourism, attracting citizens across smaller communities which lack the quality-of-life amenities. Many rural towns have aging infrastructure and are unable to maintain or construct wellness centers, including pools. Overall, the inbound commuting flow into Grafton each day is 70% higher than the daily outflow. Grafton is seen as a regional hub, making it an opportune location to serve other communities in District 19. To keep our agriculture region sector strong, we must sustain rural communities, making them competitive to attracting young families and workers.

This type of grant is part of a community development strategy to keep rural towns livable. For matters of quality of life and rural prosperity, I support this bill appropriation.

In closing, I appreciate your consideration to support of HB 1548.

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer Dusek, District 19

jdusek@graftonnd.gov

(701) 352-1561



**164 WEST 13 STREET  
GRAFTON, ND 58237**

Testimony of Matthew S. Viscito, M.D. in support of HB 1548  
To the House Human Services Committee  
Tuesday, January 28, 2025

Representative Ruby and members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Dr. Matthew Viscito.

I am a family physician and serve as Chief Medical Officer of Unity Medical Center in Grafton, North Dakota. I am Board Certified in Family Medicine and am a Fellow of the American Academy of Family Physicians. I was awarded the North Dakota Family Physician of the Year in 2022. I am also an Associate Clinical Professor of Family and Community Medicine for the University of North Dakota School of Medicine.

I support House Bill 1548. There is a well-established connection between physical health, mental health and general wellness. A search on Pubmed of the terms “exercise” and “wellbeing” yields a staggering 13,251 results of published scientific papers. A cursory review of the first page of results demonstrates connections between exercise and benefit in those diagnosed with anxiety & depression, coronary artery disease, fibromyalgia, lung cancer and pulmonary hypertension, in addition to decreasing the risk of falls in the elderly. Of course, there are numerous other conditions from which sufferers will see improved outcomes with exercise including diabetes, emphysema, migraines, osteoporosis, and obesity. Additionally, there is a plethora of data that demonstrates regular exercise is key in primary prevention, meaning to decrease the likelihood of a condition before it has developed – these conditions include hypertension, heart attack, stroke and diabetes.

I spend a large portion of my time each week educating patients about these benefits of exercise and helping them break down barriers to maintain a program of regular physical activity. One consistent theme is lack of access to a safe exercise environment. While the summer months allow for walking, biking and other outdoor activities, our harsh northern climate limits those activities for many of my patients to six or fewer months each year. The remainder of the year, there is a marked paucity of viable facilities where one can get adequate cardiovascular exercise. Additionally, a frequent recommendation I make is for low impact exercise, particularly for my aging patient population that commonly suffer from arthritis and other joint conditions. Water-based exercise such as swimming and water aerobics can afford these individuals the benefits of cardiovascular exercise while limiting the stress and strain on joints such as knees and hips.

Beyond the benefits on physical conditions, also well established are the improvements in mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression with regular physical activity. For numerous reasons, the need for increased focus on mental health in our country has been a frequent topic in the media in recent years. Further, there is a growing trend for pharmaceutical treatments to be looked down upon, particularly when wellness-based behaviors could be an equal, if not better option. I cannot say I disagree as many medications for anxiety and depression are imperfect, having significant side effect risk and often less than ideal effect. Meanwhile, there are no ill effects from regular safe exercise while the benefits are astounding.

MISSION STATEMENT:

UNITY MEDICAL CENTER PROVIDES ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTH CARE FOR THE REGION



**164 WEST 13 STREET  
GRAFTON, ND 58237**

**MISSION STATEMENT:**

**UNITY MEDICAL CENTER PROVIDES ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTH CARE FOR THE REGION**

I sincerely hope you will support HB 1548. Offering our regional population a place to commune and pursue their wellness would be a huge boon in so many ways. The benefits to individuals would be immediately felt, while the benefits to the community and surrounding areas will be evident for generations.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Matthew S. Viscito, MD, FAAFP, DABFM  
Chief Medical Officer  
Unity Medical Center  
Grafton, North Dakota, 58237

[mviscito@unitymedcenter.com](mailto:mviscito@unitymedcenter.com)

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**Testimony of Representative Kristi Henriksen Wilfahrt in Support of HB1548  
To the House Human Services Committee  
Tuesday, January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

Chairman Ruby and Members of the House Human Services Committee,

My name is Kristi Henriksen Wilfahrt (Grafton High School, Class of 1988) and I am writing in support of House Bill 1548 and respectfully ask you to consider supporting:

- **A \$10 million appropriation challenge grant** for a new wellness center that could potentially renovate or replace the Collette Fitness Center that is approximately 57 years old. The proposed regional center is anticipated to:
  - Double+ in size to support the growing needs of area residents, and
  - Provide expanded accessible, healthy activity space year-round, and
  - Feature a collaborative business model with partnerships that can include the local Health System, the Grafton Public School System, Grafton Parks & Recreation, the city of Grafton, and the Life Skills & Transition Center, as well as others
  - Increase available activities and programs in many areas like aquatics, youth and other populations athletic and activity spaces, sports acceleration programs, therapies, indoor walking tracks, and many other valuable programs that encourage and will improve the overall health and wellness of all who live in or visit the region,
  - Enhance the services provided to residents of the Life Skills & Transition Center, as well as the many individuals they serve.
- A request to amend **HB 1548 to include an additional \$800,000 to conduct a Facility Condition Assessment** and for preliminary master planning of the existing Life Skills and Transition Center campus. The facility condition assessment will help identify existing buildings for reuse and/or demolition and will provide a baseline cost of capital renewal needs. The preliminary master plan will utilize the facility condition assessment data to develop a comprehensive master plan that identifies Life Skills Transition Center operational needs as well as synergies for community-oriented reuse of property that is no longer needed to serve Life Skills' operations.

**Collette Fitness Center Overview**

The Collette Fitness Center has been providing “recreation and enrichment activities since 1967 for people receiving residential services at the Life Skills & Transition Center. Collette is a public facility; members of the community can use Collette Fitness Center, including the basketball / gymnasium, racquetball court, cardio room with treadmills, exercise bikes, and rowing machines, the weight room, the indoor heated pool and the walking paths / tunnels. The general public can also participate in fitness classes offered by instructors.

**The Opportunity**

Last spring (2024), Grafton citizens voted yes (76%) to provide ½ cent sales tax to support a new swimming pool. In August, Grafton Parks & Recreation commissioned a feasibility study of key stakeholders to determine the community's ability and willingness to support a \$5 million fundraising campaign to replace the current 70-year-old outdoor public pool, which is failing. Conversations with key stakeholders identified concerns that perhaps an outdoor pool used 9-10

weeks a year is not the best use of funding and encouraged the community to consider a year-round facility that focused on overall health & wellness. Several partners have expressed interest in participating in such a new facility and method to promote a healthier community.

IBIS-Enterprises has been hired to complete the business planning, project, and partnership development for a new wellness center that will serve the region. This work is underway and expected to be completed in 90 days. IBIS has a 30-year track record of only working with communities that operate in the black with their wellness facilities. (Including, Choice Health & Fitness in Grand Forks)

### **Closing**

We are coming to you today to ask for a **do pass** on HB 1548. The region has expressed a need and desire for a new wellness center that will improve the quality of life in the region for all, while at the same time offers an opportunity to think strategically about how the community could maximize the use of property that is served by existing infrastructure to meet a community economic development need.

Thank you,

Kristi Henriksen Wilfahrt, Nonprofit & Fund Development Consultant  
email:kristi.wilfahrt@outlook.com; cell: 701-317-6729



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## Testimony of Dawn Mandt in support of HB 1548

### To the House Human Services Committee

Tuesday, January 28, 2025

Rep. Ruby and members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Dawn Mandt and I am a Grafton resident and executive director of the Red River Regional Council. The regional council is an economic and community development organization serving the four counties of Region 4 in northeast North Dakota for the past fifty years.

In the mid-1990s, I staffed an effort for five years to redevelop unused or under-utilized areas of the Life Skills and Transition Center (LSTC). This was following the migration of care for developmentally disabled to community-based settings and a continual decline of the people residing on the campus in Grafton. This effort included a Steering Committee which was co-chaired by Lt. Governor Rosemarie Myrdal and Sen. Harvey Tallackson. The ND Department of Commerce funded a study to determine alternate uses. **This effort led to the redevelopment of two grand historic properties that were built in the early 1900s and had been vacant for twenty years.** We secured 12 sources of cash and Metro Plains Development became our developer – which led to the development of 49 apartments that have enjoyed full occupancy for nearly 30 years.

Today, we have a similar opportunity.

And today, we can dream even bigger.

Just a few years ago, we conducted 130 business interviews and revealed a great need for more people in our region. At that time, we estimated the need for 1,500 new employees in our region, excluding Grand Forks. We have a strong manufacturing sector with more than 25 manufacturing companies in Walsh and Pembina Counties alone with more than 1,200 employees and 90% of them have growth plans and need to replace retiring staff. Our farmers are now also making great use of the H2A visa program and in 2024, we had nearly 1,000 temporary farm workers in our region. These numbers are not captured in the Census data.

Two years ago, we resurrected the nonprofit housing development organization we first established to support that 1990s effort. We are working to address the complex issues related to rural housing to enable our people attraction efforts.

**Our 2024 regional housing study forecasted the need for 4,800 housing units in our rural region based on job forecasts.**

We need quality of life assets in our small towns. **Our regional, rural population is 35,000 people – the size of West Fargo.** This population is spread throughout 42 communities. Our people live, work and play within approximately an hour radius as many of our people have a connection to the land. They will remain disbursed. **We are also building a regional mindset and building collaborative relationships between communities.**

Examples of this include our regional people attraction initiative entitled Real. Good. Northeast ND and the partnerships we have established with Grand Forks with a shared regional workforce plan that we are just now completing. We also joined two communities in 2024 and signed a contract to build four new single-family homes. Two are complete in Lakota and are sold. Two more are under construction in Larimore. And a couple weeks ago, Park River started a similar project.

**We have very positive, forward-looking people in our small towns.** Hoople cut the ribbon on a new community center on New Years Eve, people in Michigan have started buying and flipping houses, Destination Fordville is a local group making continuous community improvements, and Cavalier's main street is looking brand new due to storefront improvement incentives.

**This proposed wellness facility would be another exemplary project of collaboration.**

In a recent public survey, we heard from hundreds of people in our region – 90% of them want community growth and vibrancy. Today, you've heard from several key collaborative partners from the northeast region – with excitement on coming together to enable this bold vision. **Facilities such as this are differentiators that keep our people healthy, create a sense of community, and welcome newcomers. And – serve the State's vision of becoming the healthiest state in the country.**

We know we can achieve even more when we come together, when we act as one with a shared vision and purpose.

In addition to the \$10 million request for capital improvements with the wellness facility, I ask you to consider an additional \$800,000.

We estimate \$500,000 is needed to:

- **Complete a Facility Condition Assessment** to identify existing buildings for reuse and/or demolition and provide a baseline cost of capital renewal needs
- **Complete a preliminary master plan** to utilize the assessment data to develop a comprehensive master plan and identify synergies for reuse
- **These two elements would be completed within 12 months.**

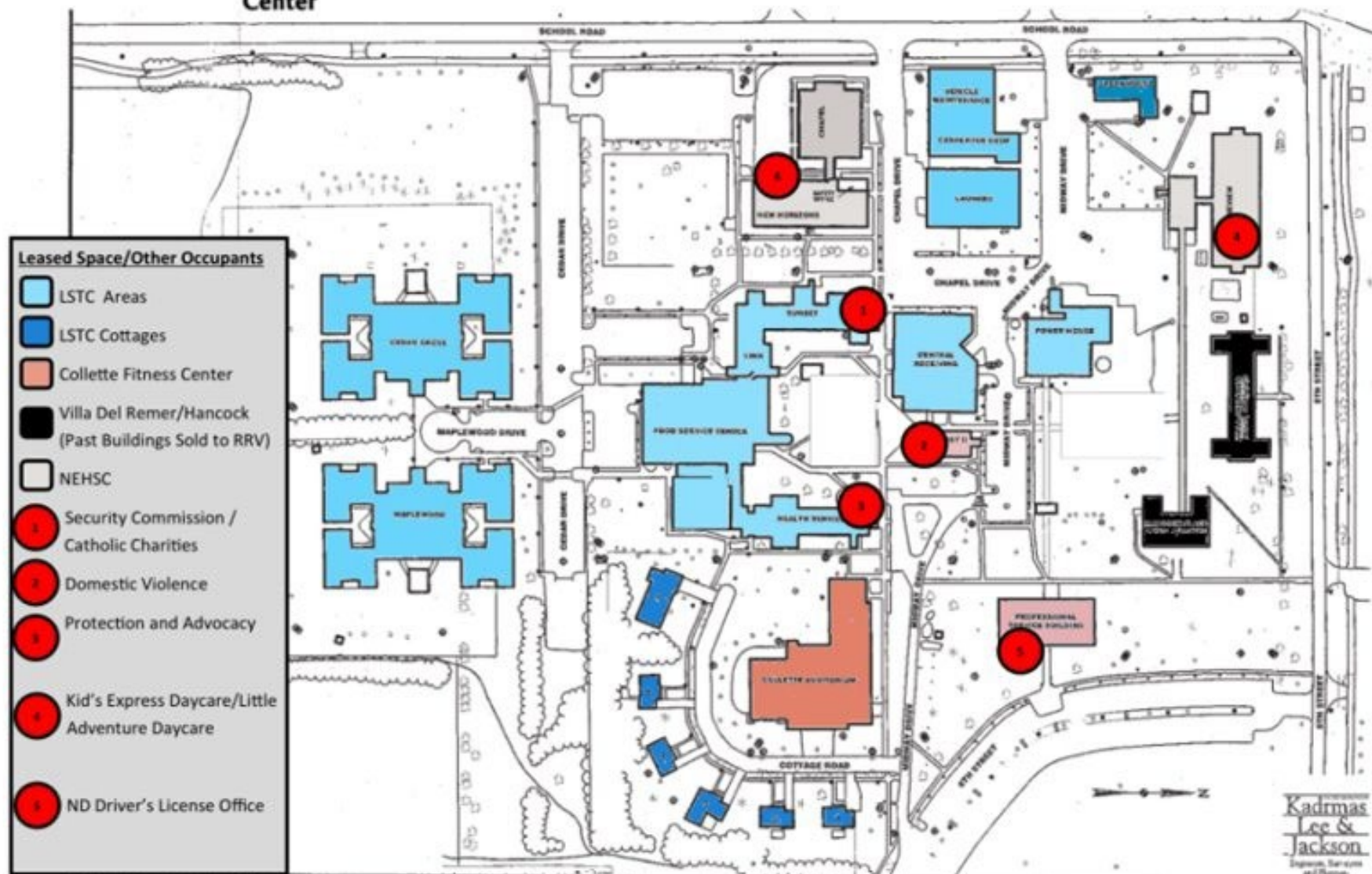
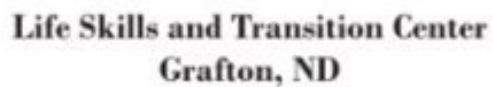
We would use \$300,000 to **enable staff leadership as a Project Manager** – the role I played in the 1990s for five years. This approach would make it possible for community stakeholders to come together with the state of North Dakota to develop an intentional master plan that both preserves the ongoing and important mission of the Life Skills and Transition Center while also opening the door to new ideas and new beginnings for the Grafton community and the whole northeast region.

*Dawn Mandt, Executive Director*

[dawn@redriverrc.com](mailto:dawn@redriverrc.com)

701-520-0487







<b>Superintendent</b>	<b>Grafton High School</b>	<b>Century Elementary</b>	<b>Century Elementary</b>	<b>Activities Director</b>
Darren Albrecht	Randy Rice, 7-12	Brad Larson, 3-6	Jill Olson, PK-2	Jon Koehmstedt
1548 School Road	1548 School Road	830 15 St West	1542 School Road	1548 School Road
701-352-1930	701-352-1930	701-352-1930	701-352-1930	701-352-1930
701-352-1943 Fax	701-352-1943 Fax	701-352-1120 Fax	701-352-0163 Fax	701-352-1943 Fax

**Testimony of Chad Ruzicka in support of HB 1548  
To the House Human Services Committee  
Tuesday, January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

Representative Ruby and members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Chad Ruzicka.

I am a life-long resident of Grafton and have been employed by Grafton Public Schools for the past 31 years and have had the pleasure of serving as the district Director of Facilities for the past 19 years. I am a member of the International Facility Manager's Association and have my own consulting business in which I assist other K-12 school districts across North Dakota and Minnesota through facilities assessments which often result in the need for large capital improvements, which I in turn oversee the design and construction of these projects. Facilities are my passion, and I study them each day so I can bring the best possible outcomes to those I assist.

I support HB 1548. After studying the overall conditions of the Collette Fitness Center on the Life Skills and Transition Center Campus (Constructed in 1967, 57 years old) and the Lestikow Park Pool, it is very clear that substantial capital improvements are needed at both facilities. While the State has been good stewards of the upkeep of the Collette Fitness Center, it is very difficult to deny the fact that the caustic and corrosive chemicals associated with pools, the lack of adequate ventilation for that type of use and the overall wear and tear of this era of facility, have taken their toll on the facilities.

By establishing funding for this project, you will open doors to a modern, energy-efficient multi-use facility that will be able to be utilized by residents from the Life Skills and Transition Center as well as the residents from the entire Northeast Region of North Dakota and beyond. New Americans with Disabilities code will be followed closely if designed so everyone regardless of capability will be able to enjoy the new facility for years to come. The Northeast Region needs a facility of this nature to offer constituents a year-round option for full health and wellness well-being.

Each day that school is in session, we have a group of about ten students that are residents of the Life Skills and Transition Center that attend school in our facility that assist us in maintaining our facility through assigned tasks which help them to learn lifelong skills. It has been fun to watch these students interact with other students and see the friendships they have developed due to being included in public instruction. I think it is awesome to see these students, no matter their abilities, be included and lead meaningful lives. I feel that by having a modern wellness center would be the perfect way to promote the interaction of the LSTC residents with the public through facilities usage

**Board of Education**  
Donald Suda, President  
Jennifer Thompson, Vice President  
Chad Bigwood, Nathan Green, Trina Papenfuss,  
Jayce Schumacher and Maggie Suda  
*Cathi Heuchert, Business Manager*

and new programming opportunities presented through the addition of this new facility. With the current facilities, significant barriers which are present merely due to the age of the facilities are not able to be overcome without a well-planned new facility which will be able to be enjoyed by all.

This project will serve as a catalyst for our entire region, and I am excited to see all the ways in which the Grafton Public Schools can collaborate with all end users to utilize this facility to its full intent. The timing is right to explore adding such a facility and, with your support, I feel it is very attainable. Thank you for your consideration and support of HB 1548.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chad Ruzicka", with a stylized, flowing script.

Chad Ruzicka, IFMA CFM  
Director of Facilities  
Grafton Public Schools  
Grafton, ND 58237  
[Chad.Ruzicka@k12.nd.us](mailto:Chad.Ruzicka@k12.nd.us)  
Mobile: 701-520-0377

# 2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Human Services Committee Pioneer Room, State Capitol

HB 1548

2/3/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the department of health and human services for a fitness center grant at the life skills and transition center.

4:15 p.m. Chairman M. Ruby opened the meeting.

Members Present: Chairman Ruby, Vice-Chairman Frelich, Representatives Anderson, Beltz, Bolinske, Davis, Dobervich, Fegley, Kiefert, Rios, Rohr

Members Absent: Representatives Hendrix, Holle

### Discussion Topics:

- Committee action

4:17 p.m. Representative K. Anderson moved a Do Pass and rerefer to appropriations.

4:17 p.m. Representative Rios seconded the motion.

Representatives	Vote
Representative Matthew Ruby	N
Representative Kathy Frelich	N
Representative Karen Anderson	Y
Representative Mike Beltz	N
Representative Macy Bolinske	N
Representative Jayme Davis	N
Representative Gretchen Dobervich	N
Representative Cleyton Fegley	N
Representative Jared Hendrix	AB
Representative Dawson Holle	AB
Representative Dwight Kiefert	N
Representative Nico Rios	Y
Representative Karen Rohr	N

4:19 p.m. Motion failed 2-9-2.

4:19 p.m. Representative Fegley moved a Do Not Pass.

4:19 p.m. Representative Beltz seconded the motion.

Representatives	Vote
Representative Matthew Ruby	Y
Representative Kathy Frelich	Y
Representative Karen Anderson	N
Representative Mike Beltz	Y

Representative Macy Bolinske	Y
Representative Jayme Davis	Y
Representative Gretchen Dobervich	Y
Representative Cleyton Fegley	Y
Representative Jared Hendrix	AB
Representative Dawson Holle	AB
Representative Dwight Kiefert	Y
Representative Nico Rios	Y
Representative Karen Rohr	N

4:20 p.m. Motion passed 9-2-2.

Representative Dobervich will carry the bill.

4:21 p.m. Chairman M. Ruby closed the meeting.

*Jackson Toman, Committee Clerk*

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE**  
**HB 1548 ([25.1165.02000](#))**

**Human Services Committee (Rep. M. Ruby, Chairman)** recommends **DO NOT PASS** (9 YEAS, 2 NAYS, 2 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HB 1548 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar.