



**North Dakota Grain Growers Association
Testimony in Support of SB 2282
House Government and Veterans Affairs
Committee
March 25, 2021**

Chairman Kasper, members of the House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee, for the record my name is Tom Bernhardt; I am a diversified family farmer from Linton, North Dakota and I am involved with renting land from the Board of University and School Lands. I am also President of the North Dakota Grain Growers Association. NDGGA, through our contracts with the North Dakota Wheat Commission and the North Dakota Barley Council, engages in domestic policy issues on the state and federal level on behalf of North Dakota wheat and barley farmers. I am providing testimony for you today on behalf of myself and NDGGA in support of SB 2282.

Chairman Kasper, members of the House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee, it is essential in today's world to have an agricultural voice in the activities of the Board of University and School Lands. I and NDGGA feel that the Board of University and School Lands becomes more effective in dealing with landowner relations and land administration if that agricultural presence has the Agriculture Commissioner as a part of the Board makeup. From my experience in dealing with the Board, I believe that having the Ag Commissioner as a part of the Board gives the Board a better perspective on Board administration, landowner relations and North Dakota agriculture in general. It is my opinion as well as that of NDGGA that allowing the voters to decide the issue and having the corresponding North Dakota Century Code update would be the prudent course of action.

NDGGA has heard two criticisms of the legislation; first this would create a situation of an even numbered board. I would point out that 8 House and 7 Senate legislative standing committees operate very effectively with an even number of members. NDGGA is confident that the Board of University and School Lands can effectively operate with an even number of members.

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Second, there is a concern with the Board having all three of the Industrial Commission members of the board. I would point out that right now a quorum of the Industrial Commission presently are members of the Board. NDGGA feels that having an agricultural presence on the Board far outweighs any concerns of having the full Industrial Commission membership considering a quorum of the Industrial Commission is already represented.

Therefore, Chairman Kasper, members of the House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee, SB 2282 is a necessary step in paving the way for the Agriculture Commissioner to become a member of the Board of University and School Lands should the voters approve it. Therefore I and the North Dakota Grain Growers Association feel this is a positive step forward for North Dakota governance and would ask the Committee and the full House to approve SB 2282.