



House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee

SB 2282 & SCR 4007

Emmery Mehlhoff, NDFB Public Policy Liaison

March 25, 2021

Chairman Kasper and members of the committee,

My name is Emmery Mehlhoff, farmer and rancher from Spiritwood, ND and NDFB Public Policy Liaison. I am here to represent the North Dakota Farm Bureau on behalf of our 28,000 members families.

NDFB stands in support of SB 2282 and SCR 4007 which would provide agricultural representation to the Board of University and School Lands assisting in the oversight of the State Trust Lands.

In 1889, the *Enabling Act* made ND a state and gave sections 16 and 36 in every township to the state “for the support of common schools.” The Department of Trust Lands now manages over 700,000 acres designated for agricultural production. 4,400 farmers and ranchers rent the land, generating over 17 million dollars in rental income for the 2017-2019 biennium. Yet there is no agriculture representation on the trust lands board. The agriculture community generating those funds has reached out with growing concerns regarding the agricultural perspective on the Board of University and School Lands.

NDFB believes the future of the funding for the state land investment funds relies on the sustainability of its land. The Land Board is more than an investment board that manages funds but also a board that manages land. The value of the land depends on agriculture production and producers managing it appropriately and adequately. Because of the uniqueness of managing land, the committee believes the agriculture commissioner will be an invaluable addition to the State Land Board.

NDFB urges the committee give a Do Pass recommendation to SB 2282 and companion piece SCR 4007 to send the question to the ballot for the people to decide if they believe there should be agricultural representation on the Land Board.

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