

Chairman Luick and Members of the Senate Agriculture Committee,

For the record, my name is Barton Schott and I farm near Kulm, North Dakota. I also serve as Chair of the State Soil Conservation Committee, but I am here today to testify on my own behalf, as a farmer and taxpayer, in opposition to Senate Bill 2342.

I know first-hand the importance of soil health, and I work hard to maintain the productivity of the land I farm. Actions that promote soil conservation and soil health, like many of those described in this bill, are very important for the future of North Dakota agriculture. However, I believe that existing programs and organizations are better equipped to promote soil health than the programs created by this bill.

North Dakota's Soil Conservation Districts (SCDs) provide voluntary programs including soil testing, erosion control, cover crop assistance, demonstration plots, field days, and youth education. These programs are directly targeted toward improving soil health, water quality, and long-term agricultural productivity. SCDs partner with other agricultural and conservation groups to maximize the impact of every dollar they have. Although this bill looks to have positive intentions, it seems to ignore the work already being done by SCD supervisors and employees across the state.

If our goal is to promote soil health statewide, I believe the best way to do so is by investing in Soil Conservation Districts and helping them to expand their voluntary, locally-led soil health programs, rather than creating an entirely new section of state law.

Thank you for your hard work in support of North Dakota agriculture, and for listening to my testimony. I am happy to stand for any questions now, and if any questions come up later please feel free to contact me.

Barton Schott
Kulm, ND
701-647-2272
bartonschott1@gmail.com