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**Testimony of
Matt Perdue
North Dakota Farmers Union
Before the
Senate Agriculture Committee
February 4, 2021**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 2342. My name is Matt Perdue, and I am testifying on behalf of North Dakota Farmers Union's (NDFU) members.

NDFU supports SB 2342, and specifically, sections 1-11 of the bill. We believe these sections align statute with the important role that soil conservation districts play in promoting soil health through voluntary practices and programs.

Over the last few years, there has been an increased focus on reducing carbon emissions and increasing carbon sequestration. The 2018 Farm Bill included a combined 10 references to "weather volatility," "carbon," and "climate." Major corporations like Cargill, McDonald's, General Mills and others have also pledged to reduce carbon emissions in their supply chain. Put simply, new policies and market forces increasingly rely on farmers and ranchers to play a central role in climate initiatives. Our locally led soil conservation districts are on the front lines and critical to farmers' and ranchers' ability to adapt.

While growing concerns about climate change represent a challenge for some industries, they can represent a major opportunity for farmers and ranchers. Practices that sequester carbon also improve soil health and the productivity of agricultural lands. North Dakota's farmers and ranchers have already deployed soil health practices like no-till, cover crops and rotational grazing, because of the farm- and ranch-level benefits they provide. With appropriate compensation, producers can continue to implement practices that improve soil health and provide offsets for other industries.

Sections 1-11 of SB 2342 recognize the critical assistance soil conservation districts provide in deploying soil health practices. The new language supports a continued focus on soil health. Because of the soil conservation districts, farmers and ranchers can rely on trusted neighbors to voluntarily improve soil health in a way that best suits their operation. Our members greatly prefer this voluntary partnership over blanket mandates.





NDFU recognizes that, as farmers and ranchers adapt to new realities, we are asking more of our soil conservation districts. We support adequately funding our soil conservation districts to address these challenges. We also recognize there are some stakeholder concerns with certain provisions of this bill. We stand ready to support collaborative discussions that ensure the needs of farmers, ranchers and conservation districts are met.

Thank you for your consideration. I will stand for any questions.

