

**North Dakota Stockmen's Association**  
**Testimony to the**  
**Senate Appropriations Committee on SB 2020**  
**Jan. 20, 2021**

Good afternoon, Chairman Holmberg and Senate Appropriations Committee members.

For the record, my name is Julie Ellingson and I represent the North Dakota Stockmen's Association, a 91-year-old beef cattle trade organization comprised of approximately 3,000 cattle-ranching families.

We join with our agricultural colleagues in enthusiastic support of SB 2020 and the critical programs and projects it represents and that were vetted and prioritized by the State Board of Agricultural Research and Education. Agriculture is our state's foundational economic engine and these research and Extension efforts help keep our industry strong.

We recognize the budget challenges facing our state and the challenging task on your shoulders as you prioritize needs and allocate funds for the next biennium. As you weigh those important decisions, we urge you, though, to keep in mind the state's return-on-investment when you invest in ag research and Extension endeavors. Instead of being part of the problem, this bill can be part of the solution, as it will help bolster the state's primary economic driver, agriculture; leverage matching dollars from industry and private investors; and generate more tax dollars that will result from agriculture's prosperity – dollars that can help address some of our state's other economic woes.

The 15 percent cuts as proposed in the governor's budget are significant and, coupled with the contractions over the past couple of cycles, will take a toll on critical programs and resource people and expose gaps that will directly impact our industry. For these reasons, we echo the request to restore funding to the current level as a top priority so we don't lose ground on the research and Extension progress we have made.

We are excited about some of the initiatives flagged in the SBARE priorities, too. Among them: the no. 1 Extension priority, the Livestock Initiative, which will provide off-campus livestock management, livestock development, grazing, forage and cover crop support and a veterinary epidemiologist to our resource base, and the Experiment Station's Capital Improvement requests, which will provide modernization and necessary upgrades to facilities at the Carrington, Central Grasslands and Hettinger Research Centers, among others. The Agricultural Health and Safety Initiative is also one worth noting. It zeroes in on reducing occupational hazards, as well as the mental health concerns in our industry, which have been fueled recently by roller coaster commodity prices, weather extremes, supply disruptions, relentless pandemic implications and other stressors that impact individuals, families and rural communities.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns and for all the hard work you have already devoted to keeping agriculture strong.

If we can be of assistance to you as you chart the course for agricultural investment for the next biennium, please call our office at (701) 223-2522.