



**Testimony of Katie Vculek
On behalf of the North Dakota Corn Growers Association
February 2, 2023**

In OPPOSITION to SB 2037

Chairman Luick and members of the Agriculture and Veteran Affairs Committee,

My name is Katie Vculek, and I am a board member of the North Dakota Corn Growers Association (NDCGA). NDCGA is the voice of the more than 13,000 corn growers across the state at the grass roots level. On behalf of our state's corn growers, I express our opposition to SB 2037.

I farm with my family near Oakes, ND, and consider water management one of the best ways we can improve our land and provide economic growth to our region. Under current law, local landowners can petition for an assessment project. The water resource district and its engineers then plan the project, notify landowners of their approximate assessment, and bring the project to a vote. From beginning to end, the assessment project keeps the decision making at the local level and allows the local majority to decide whether a project should be implemented or not.

My neighbors and I get to decide if the benefit outweighs the cost. The economic analysis required by SB 2037 shifts that analysis away from the district and its engineers to a system developed by the further removed State Department of Water Resources. Shifting this analysis away from the local level and to a State developed system will result in more bureaucracy, requiring landowners, farmers, and Districts to expend more time and money than ever before.

While I understand that issues have arisen in some water resource districts which has in part prompted this legislation and the preceding drainage study that occurred last year. Those concerns should be addressed for the very few instances and not trigger a wholesale "solution" statewide in search of problems where the process is working for the vast majority of the state.

These assessment projects are already an undertaking for a community to complete. Saddling these projects with additional processes and procedures can only slow progress in a local community. Assessment projects provide a major direct benefit of outlet access for landowners. But proper water management in a community also provides benefits for first responders and rural road maintenance. I attended a hearing last summer where a first responder expressed his concern with a delayed assessment project. The backed-up water caused roads to deteriorate and impacted his ability to respond to emergencies in his community. I trust my local water resource district and its engineers to understand these benefits and costs better than the economic analysis required by SB 2037.

We ask that you vote ***for*** local control and ***against*** this government overreach and oppose SB 2037 for the sake of farmers like us in North Dakota. Thank you for your time and consideration. I stand for any questions.