



North Dakota Senate

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COMMITTEES:

Appropriations

March 13, 2025

Good morning, Chairman Beltz and the House Agriculture Committee. I am pleased to be here to introduce SB 2157. This idea started over a year ago as I was visiting with some patrons about all the farm accidents that have occurred in our county. The number is quite staggering. We have lost a high school worker to a power wire entanglement with a sprayer, we have lost several farmers to tractor mishaps, we have lost several farmers to grain bin entrapments, and also loss of life from well fall, balers and other large equipment entanglements. We have also suffered a variety of injuries from auger entanglements, skid steer accidents, chemical inhalations and NH₃ inhalations with most of these causing permanent disabilities or further health issues. These have all happen during the my time as a legislator which is 15 years. It seems to be a sad reality but when accidents effects young and old alike at what seems to an increasing rate, it may be time to look for better solutions. I thought in may be a good idea to promote farm safety programs that could provide insurance discounts much like our defensive driving course do with auto insurance. I fully intended to present a bill this session to do that and began to gather information to get something together to introduce.

I ran this idea by the Insurance Commissioner, Jon Godfried, Agriculture Commissioner, Doug Gohring, and several of our large farm insurance companies. They all seem to think the idea was doable but had concerns on how to implement it. Contacting the Farm Safety Coordinator, Angie Johnson, from NDSU Extension confirmed that this was a statewide problem and she also had concerns also that her work was not as effective as intended and was excited to see if future work could be improved.

All thought this would seem to be a reasonable idea, but the more we talked, the more we realized that It was not as easy as one might think. One of the biggest challenges is that farm safety covers so many different aspects like equipment operation, PTO and transmission driven equipment, working with livestock and livestock equipment, chemical and fertilizer application, grain movement and storage aspects. With so many different types of safety training and awareness that would be needed, it is apparent a single course would not suffice to warrant an insurance premium discount.

Eventually, I came to the conclusion that a study might be the best solution to find the right way to find meaningful safety training and awareness that it would be worthy of an insurance premium discount and provide value to our insurance companies that may allow for that discount. Mr. Chairman I believe this committee can find the

best way to implement that study. I would offer a few suggestions for this committee to consider when you discuss this. First, I would hope that the Insurance Commissioner and Agriculture Commissioner would be included as members of that study. I would also hope that our farm agencies and insurance companies would also be considered as non-voting members. This committee may even consider appropriate money for an institution like NDSU to provide research and provide valuable information for this study. Chairman Beltz, I believe that we can find solutions to farm safety that prevent more deaths or disabilities to the farming community. I also believe that this issue is important enough to force a "shall study" that would require Legislative Management to add SB2157 to this next interim work. Mr. Chairman, that is the intent is of SB 2157 and I would be happy to answer any questions.