

Chairman Monson and Members of the House Appropriations Committee - Government Operations Division,

My name is David Hill from Willow City, ND. I serve as the 2025 Chair of the North Dakota State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC) and represent Area III. *I also serve as a Supervisor on the Rolette County Soil Conservation District.* I am here today to express my strong support for SB2020 and, specifically, the NDSU Extension priority list, with particular emphasis on the number two initiative: Extension and State Soil Conservation Committee Operating Support.

The SSCC operates as a division of NDSU Extension, providing administrative assistance and program planning support to the 54 Soil Conservation Districts (SCDs) across North Dakota. One of the primary responsibilities of the SSCC is to distribute appropriated funds received from the state legislature to local conservation districts. These funds are essential, as 100% of the state appropriations are allocated directly to SCDs to support employee salaries and benefits.

State appropriations are instrumental in ensuring that SCDs can effectively fulfill their conservation missions. The employees funded through this support play a pivotal role in assisting local producers in implementing conservation practices that improve soil health, water quality, and overall agricultural sustainability. They work directly with agriculture producers to improve practices in their operations which increases their profitability.

Utilizing the District Activity Reporting Tool (DART), we can quantify the impact and accomplishments of SCDs. In 2024 alone, North Dakota's Soil Conservation Districts:

- Delivered conservation and agricultural literacy educational programs almost 20,000 K-12 students, fostering a new generation of environmentally conscious leaders. They also hosted workshops, programs, and field days that engaged almost 13,000 adult participants.
- Seeded more than 3,000 acres of cover crops and over 4,700 acres of grasslands, enhancing soil health, livestock forage, and wildlife habitats.
- Installed more than 670 miles of weed barriers and planting nearly 37,000 trees by hand, contributing to erosion control and ecological stability.
- Conducted almost 500 hours of soil testing and over 550 hours of soil mapping to empower agricultural producers with actionable insights.
- Provided more than 500 field visits and dedicated more than 3,300 hours to delivering conservation technical assistance directly to producers.

The work of SCDs would not be possible without reliable funding to support their personnel and operations. I urge the committee to support SB2020 and ensure that this additional crucial funding be considered. By doing so, you are investing in the long-term sustainability of North Dakota's natural resources and agricultural productivity.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted,

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