



NORTH DAKOTA CONSERVATION DISTRICT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

**Testimony of
Sarah Tunge
North Dakota Conservation District Employees Association
Before the
House Appropriations Committee Government Operations Division
March 11, 2025**

Honorable Chairman Monson and Members of the House Appropriations Committee
Government Operations Division – Support for SB 2020

My name is Sarah Tunge, and I serve as the Partnership and Programs Director to the North Dakota Conservation District Employees Association (NDCDEA). A grass roots organization that represents the 115+ Soil Conservation District employees in North Dakota. The objective of the Association is to promote education and professional development to facilitate the effective and efficient delivery of voluntary conservation practices and programs to North Dakota farmers, ranchers, and landowners.

NDCDEA supports the complete list of SBARE priorities and appreciates the stakeholder input used to develop them. I want to specifically highlight the request for an increase in funding to the ND State Soil Conservation Committee with direct funds impacting local Soil Conservation Districts.

Districts provide a local link to farmers, ranchers, and landowners in the state allowing for a conduit for delivering conservation planning and technical assistance, education, and promotion of sound conservation practice implementation in collaboration with local, state, federal, and non-governmental partners.

Soil Conservation Districts are tasked with providing for the prevention of soil erosion, preserving the state's natural resources, flood control, conserving wildlife, protecting public lands, and protecting and promoting the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of this state. (*ND Century Code 4.1-20.*)

This is a tall ask of districts whose funding varies widely by county, program and service income, and outside grants and agreements. The state appropriated funds received through the State Soil Conservation Committee and SB2020 are used to maintain critical staff capacity to provide services to the citizens of each county.

District employees provide outreach and education to school-age children and adults in their counties. They work on crucial water quality improvement projects, provide comprehensive conservation planning and assist in technical assistance for cost-share program enrollment. This includes working very closely



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with our Federal partner, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, to deliver services related to Farm Bill programs.

This funding is even more important to districts as grant and agreement funding from our federal partners is in jeopardy and potential federal staff reductions mean increased workloads for district employees. District boards and employees are focused on providing uninterrupted services to their producers.

The funding request to the North Dakota State Conservation Committee doesn't meet the full financial demand from districts to maintain staffing rates in many cases and any reduction would have a substantial effect in the delivery of conservation planning, programs, outreach, and education.

We ask for your full support of SB 2020, including the full funding request for the ND State Soil Conservation Committee and local Soil Conservation Districts to continue exceptional service in their delivery of voluntary conservation across the great state of North Dakota.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I will stand for any questions.

Contact:

Sarah Tunge, Partnership & Program Director
ND Conservation District Employees Association
sarah@ndcdea.org