

Testimony to Senate Appropriations E&E Division

Re: House Bill 1020

Date: Tuesday, March 11, 2025

By: Tom Ross, Mayor of the City of Minot

Chairman Ron Sorvaag and members of the Senate Appropriations E&E Division, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about House Bill 1020. It's truly an honor to represent the City of Minot and the broader Souris River basin as we work together to secure our region's future.

As you know, the Souris River basin endured a devastating flood in 2011 that displaced more than 11,000 residents in Minot alone and damaged over 4,000 homes and businesses. It's a memory none of us will ever forget. Thirteen years later, while the scars of that disaster are fading, our community's determination to rebuild stronger and safer has only grown.

Thanks to the incredible support of the Legislature, three Governors, the Department of Water Resources, and our Congressional Delegation, we've made great strides in constructing permanent flood protection. We're proud of the progress we've made, but there's still much to do. The work completed so far has not yet removed properties from the proposed FEMA floodplain, and without further progress, our residents and businesses will continue to face rising flood insurance costs. We remain committed to securing the necessary approvals and ensuring that this project delivers its full benefit to the people of Minot and the Souris River basin.

In Minot, we are committed to doing our part. We've met our local share obligations every step of the way, and we'll continue to meet them—not just in this biennium but in the years to come. This is a shared effort, and the partnership between the state and our community is critical to protecting the lives and livelihoods of everyone in the Souris River basin. Your support for the revolving loan fund in this bill is one critical piece to financing this local share.

At the same time, we recognize that this is about more than just dollars and construction. It's about maintaining momentum—working together to find solutions that ensure the long-term safety and resilience of our region. The \$125 million in state support in this bill is possible due to improved cash management strategies by the Department of Water Resources, utilizing a \$200 million line of credit and \$100 million in bonding for another water project. These financial tools allow the state to allocate funds more efficiently, ensuring that projects can continue without delays.

As mayor, I also want to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of you for the investments you've made in our community—not just for flood control, but also for NAWS and other important water projects in our region. Because of your support, we're not just recovering from a flood; we're building a stronger future for generations to come.

Thank you for your time, your partnership, and your commitment to this vital work. I look forward to continuing this conversation and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.