

Senator Terry Wanzek, Chair
Senator Robert Erbele, Vice Chair
Government Operations Sub-committee

Regarding HB 1591 | A bill for an Act to provide an appropriation to the agriculture commissioner for a county fair resiliency grant program.

Greetings,

My name is Amber Ritterman. I am a concerned and active community member in rural North Dakota. I am also a wife, mother, agriculture advocate and financial officer. I contribute countless time, money, and effort to sustain agricultural support in our rural communities. Much of this effort comes in the form of supporting our 4H, FFA, and County Fair programs. I am testifying today in support of HB 1591 to provide a grant program to support our local county fairs across North Dakota.

I have lived in Rugby, North Dakota serving our communities as a financial officer for AgCountry Farm Credit Services for the past 10 years. I previously grew up on a farm near Harvey, North Dakota. I have seen firsthand how our County Fairs bring the community and surrounding communities together in fellowship, entertainment, and most importantly, support of agriculture. Farmers and ranchers work endlessly to help prepare their children to enter their animals or projects to the fair for not only judging, but for everyone to see. They work hard and take great pride in their projects. These students learn skills that cannot be taught in a classroom. Personally, I have submitted projects myself in my early years, as well as served as a judge for 4H and FFA events that take place at the Pierce County Fair. Seeing the passion these children ages 5-18 have for agriculture and their willingness to give back and advocate constantly reaffirms why I do what I do and why I choose to live in a rural community.

I felt the need to testify in support of this bill as we would not be able to provide these opportunities for our next generations in agriculture without the appropriate structures and facilities to host them. We cannot bring a steer or sheep into a high school gymnasium; we'd need a barn. We cannot provide the sense of community around the County Fair without the proper facilities to host projects and house animals at the same location as they're being displayed. Our County Fair Board puts their whole heart into organizing a fun, engaging and educational fair that has a long history of success behind it. I know many other counties have done the same. This is a part of rural North Dakota that we work so hard to sustain. Having access to funding for facilities to host these events is crucial to the maintaining their existence.

If you truly believe, as I do, the importance of keeping our County Fairs thriving for years to come, I urge you to give this bill a "Do Pass" recommendation.

Thank you, Senator Wanzek, for taking the time to read my testimony. Your consideration is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Amber Ritterman
701-693-5321