



Dear Chairman Luick & members of the committee:

My name is Peggy Brandt, and I am writing on behalf of the Morton County Fair Association to express our strong support for House Bill 1591, the County Fair Resiliency Grant Program.

County fairs have long been a cornerstone of our state's agricultural heritage. These events are a vital platform for showcasing local talent, promoting 4-H and FFA programs, and supporting youth activities. They serve as a celebration of our agricultural traditions and provide a unique opportunity for families, friends, neighbors and our communities to come together—whether it's to enjoy a rodeo, a demolition derby, participate in or watch a livestock show, or acknowledging the youth and local talent and strong work ethics by admiring the static exhibits. County fairs promote educational opportunities, preserve time-honored traditions, and foster community pride.

The role of county fairs in educating younger generations about agriculture and its importance to our communities and state cannot be overstated. For countless young people, 4-H and FFA are more than just extracurricular activities—they are the foundation of their future careers and a connection to the agricultural industry that sustains our way of life.

However, as many of you know, county fairs are increasingly facing significant challenges when it comes to maintaining and upgrading their facilities. Aging infrastructure, inadequate amenities, and a shortage of funding limit our ability to expand and enhance the experiences we offer to attendees, exhibitors, and vendors. These facilities are in desperate need of modernization to meet the needs of the communities they serve. While the intention of HB 1591 is to provide much-needed support, it's important to note that many smaller fairs may struggle with the requirement for a dollar-for-dollar match. These fairs often lack the financial reserves or sponsorship opportunities to meet this match, which could leave them at a disadvantage.

Additionally, the \$100,000 cap in funding may not be sufficient for fairs with severe structural or safety issues. Some fairs have no facilities at all, and the cost to build basic infrastructure or address critical safety concerns may far exceed this cap. In these cases, the amount allocated under this bill might not be enough to make the improvement needed, which could delay or even prevent them from receiving the help they need.

While we fully support the intent of HB 1591, I respectfully ask that the committee consider adjusting the dollar-for-dollar match requirement to make it more feasible for smaller fairs to participate. Furthermore, an increase in the funding cap or a tiered approach to funding would better address the needs of fairs with greater infrastructure challenges, ensuring that all fairs—large and small—can benefit from this vital program.

I strongly urge you to support HB 1591 with these considerations in mind. By supporting capital improvements through this bill, we can make the necessary investments to modernize fairgrounds, improve safety, enhance accessibility, and ultimately strengthen the sustainability of these essential community events. With this support, our fairgrounds will not only remain relevant for future generations but also ensure that county fairs can continue to thrive in the years to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Peggy Brandt
Morton County Fair Association