



HOUSE BILL NO. 1524
SENATE INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE
JEFF BARTA, CHAIR
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SECOND ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL 1524
MARCH 17, 2025

Chairman Barta and members of the Senate Industry and Business Committee. I am Parrell Grossman, and it is my privilege to be the Legislative Director for the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association. I appear on behalf of the Association in support of Second Engrossed House Bill 1524, with amendments.

The Association advocates for more than 8,900 operations that raise soybeans in North Dakota. In 2024, North Dakota farmers planted 6.6 million acres of soybeans, producing over 245 million bushels of soybeans in North Dakota.

The agricultural economic impact in North Dakota. NDSU's 2024 North Dakota Agriculture Industry Economic Contribution Analysis reported that the economic contribution to North Dakota is \$41.3 billion, including \$26 billion from direct output and \$15.3 billion from secondary output. The report also concluded that this economic contribution included 46,620 direct jobs and 76,740 secondary jobs for total jobs of 123,360.

The Association is a strong supporter of the eight regional planning councils and greatly appreciates the unique work they do, role they perform, and their successes and accomplishments for rural North Dakota across the state. This proposed funding is absolutely critical to the mission and operation of each of these councils, and the work they do is vital to rural North Dakota across the state. These councils leverage a small amount of funds to assist communities, townships, and counties with many projects. These smaller jurisdictions or political subdivisions simply don't have the staff, expertise, or financial resources to fulfill the ever-increasing and more challenging needs of rural North Dakota.

In addition to the funding secured, the additional funds that are leveraged, and the jobs created or retained, the Association particularly recognizes their important roles in supporting agriculture.

These councils can provide services to write grants or search for other funding sources. They are an excellent resource for locating and facilitating resources to assist with or address statutory or regulatory matters. One example would include zoning issues to allow animal agriculture to develop in townships and counties. With appropriate resources, these regional planning councils can provide the tools and expertise to navigate the requirements and rules involved in determining suitable areas for animal agriculture.

Vital rural communities and areas, whether at the township, city, or county level, are paramount to supporting agriculture and the families that live there. Their quality of life, functionality, and sustainability often depend upon the regional planning councils. Unlike larger communities, these communities or areas don't have staff to plan community improvements, housing developments, recreational facilities and activities, improved schools, etc. These councils, however, can provide a level of services or refer them to other resources such as grants or consultants.

The Legislature performs an important and generous role in supporting agriculture, including value-added agriculture. The Association hopes you also continue to support the rural communities that are necessary to house the employees for soybean crushing plants and ethanol plants, and all those who otherwise sustain the state's agricultural community and rural areas. These creative and committed regional councils, who receive your funding, are good financial stewards, and exponentially multiply and distribute the benefits of your funding.

For these reasons, the Association asks that you amend this legislation to restore the \$8 million funding originally requested in this legislation, from the reduced \$2.4 million by the House, to an amount of \$5 million or more. With the utmost respect, \$2.4 million divided between eight regional councils simply will be spread too thin to effectively accomplish this important work.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, for these and other stated reasons, the Association respectfully asks the Senate Industry and Business Committee to give Second Engrossed House Bill 1524 a "Do Pass" recommendation, with amendments.

Thank you for your consideration and I would be pleased to try and answer any questions.