



In Favor of HB 1218
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
March 13, 2025

Chairman Patten and Committee members:

For the record, my name is Drew Courtney. I farm in Oakes and serve as a board member for the North Dakota Corn Growers Association. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of House Bill 1218.

NDCGA works closely with water resource district leadership. This bill, as originally drafted, sought to clarify that only large flood control and water conveyance projects, over \$5 million, require an economic analysis by the State Water Commission.

As a producer, I can tell you that these projects, particularly the conveyance projects, are critical for many North Dakota producers to fully utilize their land and maximize their crop yields. It's for this reason that producers work with their local water board to initiate conveyance projects and vote to tax themselves to pay for the local share of these projects. The legislature has historically provided funding through the State Water Commission to cost share with locals on these projects. In the current budget for the State Water Commission, \$15 million is contemplated for conveyance projects.

Conveyance projects allow producers to manage the water that comes off their land in a way that minimizes impact to downstream lands and infrastructure. The North Dakota Corn Growers are appreciative of the investment the legislature is considering for rural infrastructure. The continued maintenance of county and township roads and bridges is a high priority for our members. We believe that completion and maintenance of

conveyance infrastructure is an important part of that conversation as well. As it stands today, we have a great source of funding for conveyance projects in the Resources Trust Fund. We simply run into a regulatory burden when it comes to completing the economic analysis, especially on small projects. If we could alleviate that burden by raising the threshold for economic analysis, I believe we could move forward with these important projects in a more efficient and timely manner.

When the legislature first required economic analysis for these types of projects, the legislature's intent was that projects less than \$1 million would be exempt from this additional step in the state cost share process. The legislature clearly recognized that this burden shouldn't be placed on small projects. We would ask that HB 1218 be amended back to the original threshold of \$5 million.

With that amendment, NDCGA would urge a Do Pass recommendation on HB 1218. Thank you for your consideration, and I will stand for any questions.