



**Testimony**  
**House Appropriations Committee**  
**HOUSE BILL NO. 1141**  
January 26, 2021

Good morning Chairman Delzer and members of the House Appropriations Committee. My name is Marshal Albright. I am the President and CEO of Cass County Electric Cooperative and Co-Chair of the Valley Prosperity Partnership (VPP), an initiative led by business executives to advance and advocate for shared strategic economic development opportunities for the Red River Valley region and for North Dakota.

The business executives that lead companies across the state of North Dakota that comprise the VPP desire to strengthen and diversify our economy. They feel the best means of doing so at this moment in our state's history is by investing in research and development. Thanks to the vision of these business leaders and to public policy leaders like yourself, the legislature will have multiple proposals to debate that seek to diversify the state's economy by investing state dollars into the research enterprise of the state.

One of those proposals is before you today – to continue a legacy innovation fund to support technology advancement. We support this investment in research and development, which has already impacted North Dakota's economy by funding many innovative companies with exciting ideas and high potential.

We also support House Bill 1380, which creates an economic diversification research grant fund to stimulate economic activity across the state through innovation of new technology, concepts, and products. Projects may be initiated by an institution under the control of the state board of higher education or by the private sector.

It's not only business leaders who support the state investing in research and development. So do the voters of ND. In a state-wide scientific poll commissioned by the VPP in 2018, we found that voters demonstrated strong support for research. Specifically, 79% of respondents agreed that the state of North Dakota should invest research dollars in new industries in addition to agriculture and energy in order to diversify the economy.

Thank you for your consideration of each of these proposals, and please know that business leaders throughout the state support funding for research and development to strengthen and diversify our economy.



The Valley Prosperity Partnership (VPP) is focused on developing a unified, shared vision for high value and sustained economic growth for all Red River Valley residents. A steering committee of private sector industry and higher education leaders, joined by economic development partners, work to advance strategic economic development opportunities for the Red River Valley region of North Dakota and Minnesota and for the entire State of North Dakota.

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