

Testimony, HB 1431

March 31, 2021

Senate Appropriations Committee

Dan Jacobson, Chairman, North Dakota Water Resource Districts Association

Chairman Holmberg and Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee:

My name is Dan Jacobson and I serve as the Chairman of the ND Water Resource Districts Association.

North Dakota water interests depend on the state's healthy economy and revenue outlook and can only be supported by a strong budget for the North Dakota State Water Commission's (NDSWC) operations and critical water project funding and grants. Water resource districts have a long history of providing valuable services in North Dakota to the local constituents in their respective counties and regions. Enabling legislation for the establishment of water resource districts was first passed in 1935. The responsibility of water resource districts includes water management from a local and regional perspective for beneficial uses of water, as well as for protection against flooding, erosion, and other detrimental effects of too much water.

The beneficial uses of water and protection against damages caused by flooding is critical to the agricultural and other local economies, as well as the social well-being of our citizens. Rural flood control provides crucial drainage relief not only for North Dakota farms and ranches, it also reduces flood damages to township, county, and state infrastructure.

An important piece of providing these vital services has been NDSWC funding. Without this funding, many important flood control, water supply, erosion protection, water management, and beneficial use projects would not have been completed. According to the NDSWC Water Development Plan, there exists approximately \$645M in current needs for water projects, \$342M is classified as high priority. There exists approximately \$48M in current needs for general water management projects, and approximately \$86M in current needs for water conveyance and local flood control projects. Water resource districts sponsor many of these types of projects. Our water resource districts request additional funding authorization for water resource districts' projects for this upcoming biennium.

To meet the needs of all projects, we cannot rely solely on funding from the NDSWC—another funding source must be created. The ND Water Resource Districts Association supports the water infrastructure revolving loan fund and the bonding authority authorized in HB 1431 in order to supply our communities with water and protect them from flooding. A water infrastructure revolving loan fund and bonds for infrastructure projects will help to meet those needs and provide shovel ready projects funding, reducing costs from extended project deadlines.

I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have regarding this testimony.

Thank you.