

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is JoAnn Rodenbiker. I am a former board member of the State Board for Agricultural Research & Education, current member of the Citizens Advisory Council for Extension, retired from 30+ years in the field of community and economic development, a farm wife and small business owner.

In all these roles, NDSU Extension has been a significant partner – from early years as a 4-H member to present day connections to unbiased, science-based information for customers.

2 brief examples:

- In my previous career, I was able to bring Extension's **Lead Local** program to school board, city council, church volunteers, youth groups and economic development board members in a local setting, at minimal cost, with the results evidenced by new leadership emerging in a small, rural community.
- More recently, our family has operated a garden center in Towner County, with retail outlets in Rolette and Cavalier Counties, for 11 years. This past Spring, we opened with major concerns about sales during a pandemic. Much to our surprise (and relief), we experienced a record-breaking season, with many new customers – among them first time gardeners with little to no experience in growing flowers and vegetables for themselves. Accordingly, there were numerous questions about soils, fertilizing, pests, etc. Since each county has an NDSU Extension agent, with connections to horticulture experts at NDSU, we were able to provide them with science-based information via web, telephone, and bulletins. Hopefully, this allowed success for these first-timers and will bring them back this Spring. Certainly, a benefit for our small business.

I could literally go on with hundreds of other examples. My 5 adult children attribute much of their success at public engagement and service to community to their 4-H background. I turned to Extension many times for programs and information during my career in economic development. Our work on the farm with livestock and small grains relied on Extension information and support.

My ask is simple – restoration of a hold even budget so these critical programs can continue to serve the people of North Dakota. And further consideration of the 2 additional priority initiatives as have been outlined today.

Thank you.