

Testimony, HB1380

March 17, 2021

Senate Finance and Taxation Committee

Dan Jacobson, Chairman, North Dakota Water Resource Districts Association

Chair Bell and Members of the Senate Finance and Tax 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.

As was mentioned in testimony for HB 1431, the current funding model for water projects through the NDSWC will leave the state with significant funding shortfalls in the upcoming biennium and into the future. The ND Water Resource Districts Association support the bonding authority authorized in HB 1431 as a mechanism to continue long term investment in water projects across the state. In like manner, we support HB 1380, which includes language allowing the use of legacy funds to make payments on these bonds.

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

Thank you.