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Testimony regarding HB 1166

Dear honorable members of the Ag Committee,

I am writing you all today to urge a Do Not Pass on the proposed HB 1166 regarding state funds to the weather modification and the restriction of such funds by requiring permission from neighboring, non-participating counties in order to expend these funds.

The North Dakota Cloud Modification Project (NDCMP) is the longest running aerial hail suppression project in the world. As of 2022 the NDCMP, in partnership with the University of North Dakota, has provided 402 aviation and 70 meteorology internships. The 2020 rain enhancement and hail suppression operations cost \$.14/acre with studies indicating a 45% reduction in crop hail losses. The most recent economic study of the program done in 2019 by Bangsund and Hodur at NDSU found benefit to cost ratios of 31-53 to 1 for a summer season of ag production. (www.swc.nd.gov/arb/ndcmp/pdfs/facts.pdf)

Weather Modification Authorities were created by a majority public vote or petition in the counties they operate in. Requiring permission from other counties that are not participating inhibits the wishes of the citizens of participating counties. This is not a path I think our state should go down as it sets a precedent for further restriction of funding or programs based on what a neighboring county may or may not agree upon.

One of the main responsibilities I have by serving on the Mountrail County Weather Modification Authority is to make certain the wishes of the majority of the public are upheld, and this bill would be in direct contradiction of that as it stands, so I urge a Do Not Pass recommendation. I thank you all for your consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,

Aaron Skarsgard, Chair
Mountrail County Weather Modification Authority