March 3, 2023

Chairman Thomas and members of the House Agriculture Committee,

My name is Tim Mathern. I am a former farm boy who has now lived in Fargo for over 50 years. In recent past winters, I saw mounds of field dirt along the north fence line on I-94. I saw payloaders move dirt off the highway and rest area between Edgeley and Jamestown on Highway 281. This prompted me to get interested in soil conservation and to introduce SB ~~2323~~. 2353

As you can see by the LC number, the bill has gone through 6 iterations, starting out as an appropriation for equipment, then buildings, then oversight, then to a report to Legislative Management, and now a study by the interim committee process. There was also some concern about the appropriate way to address this issue, through NDSU, North Dakota Extension Service, SBARE, or a stand-alone bill.

After a number of discussions, it was clear that there are many needs within the soil conservation entities around the state. Staff, buildings, infrastructure, software, and equipment are some of the most important. It seemed appropriate to take some time to come up with a well-researched proposal that covers a full decade. The best way to do that is to give the people closest to the need a clear understanding to the legislature to make this assessment and come back to us through a study with results to be addressed by the next legislative session.

The bill asks us to study the structure, function, operation, infrastructure, and needs of the soil conservation districts. We are to report findings and recommendations, together with any legislation required to implement the recommendations, to the next session of the legislature. I ask for a Do Pass recommendation on SB2353.

Thank you for your consideration.

Senator Tim Mathern