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Members of the Committee
House Appropriations
Education and Environment Division Public Hearing

RE: House Bill 1003 NDSU Engineering Building

Members,

In 1999, Phoenix International Corporation, a company that I founded in 1987, built the first private sector commercial building in the North Dakota State University Research and Technology Park. Shortly thereafter, the company was purchased by John Deere, and I was appointed Deere's Director of Technology Growth, a position I held until I retired from the company in 2005. Over the past 20 years, Deere has continued to grow and expand its technology presence in the state from this base in the NDSU RTP.

In 2009, I built the second private sector commercial building in the NDSU RTP to accommodate the growth of Appareo Systems, a company I founded after retirement from Deere. Then, in 2014, I purchased the commercial building in the research park previously owned by Alien Technologies. In 2020, Appareo was purchased by AGCO corporation, another world leader in the design and production of advanced agricultural equipment. During the year since the acquisition, AGCO has hired dozens of new employees and has intentions to continue to grow and expand in North Dakota.

Two of the world's largest and most advanced producers of agricultural equipment have now established technology centers in proximity to North Dakota State University, and have expressed interest in expanding these capabilities. We are creating a nexus in North Dakota for high technology development of advanced agricultural equipment. The opportunity this presents for the state cannot be overstated. What is needed to support the aspirations these and other organizations who could be drawn to the state by the presences of these titans is well educated, hardworking STEM graduates.

I have had the good fortune during the course of my career to interact on a professional level with world-class technical leaders in production agriculture, and by so doing obtain an appreciation for their expectations as regards of the capabilities of their technology partners. The knowledge I have gained during the creation and expansion of businesses in North Dakota, and the experiences gained through interactions with Fortune 500 companies, have impressed upon me the importance of establishing and expanding appreciable science and technology capabilities within the state. North Dakota is competing with substantial research universities like the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, Georgia Tech and the University of Illinois at Champaign. We cannot compete on this stage with outdated equipment and facilities. We need to step up and make the requisite investments.

On behalf of the technology-based companies in North Dakota I ask that you consider favorably the request by NDSU to update their capabilities to attract both new students and substantial private sector businesses to the state by building a new engineering center. The future return to the state will be substantial.

Respectfully,

Barry Batcheller