

Good morning, Chairman Monson and Members of the House Appropriations-Government Operations subcommittee. For the record I am Chris Augustin and serve as director of the Dickinson Research Extension Center. I am a farm kid from rural Crystal North Dakota. Thank you for this opportunity to communicate to you the value of the Dickinson Research Extension Center and how we can improve the lives of more North Dakotans.

The Dickinson Research Extension Center conducts research and outreach for southwest North Dakota that is sensible and sustainable. Thank you for your past support. We open bids for our new lab/shop this coming Wednesday.

I am grateful for the hard work and perseverance of our team. I am pleased to report that during last year's calving season that coincided with the April blizzards, we lost only one calf. Camping on cots at the Manning Ranch shop, the ranch crew fought 36 inches of snow paired with 40 mph winds to ensure the wellness of our cattle. With dedicated employees such as these, it is key the state provide an employee compensation package that addresses some of the inflationary pressures our staff face.

I support the SBARE priority list for the Ag experiment station, capital improvements, and NDSU Extension. The Plant Production and Protection Initiative would bring a much-needed research agronomist to the Dickinson Research Extension Center. This critical position would greatly improve farmer's bottom line as that person would lead a robust agronomy research program. Numerous diseases, insects, and weeds prey upon our livelihood. The research agronomist would study ways to better manage these issues and evaluate best management practices of new crops. Part of a research agronomist's duty is to find and identify methods that work under our conditions; so that farmers do not have to test on their own farms and incur unnecessary expenses by trial and error.

The SBARE capital improvement request for a Field Lab Facility request of \$97,000,000 can positively impact southwest North Dakota farmers. The improved plant breeding could lead to crop varieties that are resistant to the growing issue of soil acidity and aluminum toxicity.

Solutions could be discovered for diseases like Aphanomyces which are crippling acres of field peas and lentils.

Our Research Extension Centers have expensive farm equipment. SBARE's number 2 request is construction of equipment storage sheds. Storing the equipment in sheds is needed to prolong their life and maximize the investment for that equipment.

Thank you for your time. I am proud of what the Dickinson Research Extension Center has accomplished, but feel we are not meeting our charge without a research agronomist.