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**Testimony of
Mark Watne
North Dakota Farmers Union
Before the
House Appropriations Committee – Government Operations Division
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Chairman Monson and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 1020. My name is Mark Watne. I serve as the president of North Dakota Farmers Union.

NDFU is a strong supporter of North Dakota State University's agricultural research and extension. NDSU's ag research and extension services are crucial to the success of family farmers and ranchers. Their work helps farmers and ranchers improve productivity, combat disease, mitigate risk, and implement new farming practices. NDSU Extension also provides leadership training for youth and adults, programs that support personal wellness and strong families, and nutrition and food safety guidance. Together, these services build stronger and healthier farming communities.

First and foremost, we urge this committee to provide NDSU with the resources necessary to build attractive compensation packages for employees. Hiring and retaining talented employees is critical to NDSU's ability to serve our state's farm and ranch families.

NDFU also supports increased funding for the Northern Crops Institute. I have the privilege of serving on NCI's Northern Crops Advisory Board. In that capacity, I have seen firsthand how NCI helps build new market opportunities for farmers and ranchers. NCI gives North Dakota producers a competitive edge in domestic and international markets.

NDFU encourages increased funding for the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute. Farmers and ranchers rely on a strong network of rural roads and bridges to access the market. According to UGPTI's most recent estimates, North Dakota's rural roads and bridges require \$10.5 billion of investment over the next 20 years. UGPTI's work not only helps assess those needs; it helps our state adopt innovative and cost-effective approaches to improving our transportation system.

Finally, funding the new Ag Field Lab Facility is a top priority for our members this legislative session. For decades, NDSU's research has helped farmers become more productive, more efficient, and more resilient. However, NDSU's current facilities are badly outdated. Like many



of you, I toured the current field facilities earlier this year. There is no question that a new facility is needed, and it is needed now.

Investing in the Ag Field Lab Facility will deliver a significant return on investment. A new facility will help NDSU attract and retain top quality scientists. It will make NDSU's research more efficient and more effective. The Ag Field Lab Facility will help NDSU continue its tradition of providing world-class research for future generations of North Dakota farmers.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I will stand for any questions.