

To our esteemed legislators,

I am writing a letter in support of HB 1020, a bill for an Act to provide an appropriation for defraying the expenses of the North Dakota state university extension service, northern crops institute, upper great plains transportation institute, main research center, branch research centers, and agronomy seed farm.

As an alumnus of the College of Agriculture, Food Science, and Natural Resources, I know how important projects like these are to the university, to the students that attend, to the research conducted at the university, to the extension agency, and the myriad benefits to the state that the aforementioned provide.

For some background on me: I graduated from NDSU with a BS in horticulture, with a minor in crop and weed science. I worked several jobs with NDSU including the Animal Nutrition and Physiology Center, Central Grasslands Research and Extension Center, and NDSU dining services. I also made use of the greenhouses for several of my classes, including an independent study in which I conducted research on fertilizers in lettuce production. All of the above are related to the work that NDSU does in its various capacities. From food science and food service safety to animal quality control and assurance, food, fuel, and fiber production, and everything in between; This bill will provide for the continued work that keeps us fed, clothed, moving, safe, and profitable.

As my current role of City Forester, I rely heavily on the work of the woody plant improvement program run by Dr. Todd West. This provides me with plants that are proven in our state, giving me the assurance that I will not be wasting time and public funds on trees that may not be as hardy or tolerant of our conditions as the claims of the nurseries that sell them. This research would not be possible without proper greenhouse space, lab space with the correct equipment (which can sometimes be quite expensive), and funding for the research farms that trial the finished products.

In my personal life I am involved in my family farm and am very appreciative of the work that is done with NDSU extension from the improved crop varieties, tests on diseases and pests and their treatments to cure or prevent, and all of the advice and help from our county extension agent. Without their work, our state would not be the powerhouse in agriculture that we are. That being said, they need the space to do that work. It is a wonder that as much high-quality work has been completed with the limited space and resources available. Just imagine what they will be able to accomplish once they get that space and tools they desperately need.

I urge you to fund the new Ag Field Lab Facility. It will fill the needs of the people and departments who fulfill our needs as public employees, private ag producers and landowners, and the general gardening public. It will make a safer more robust work space and give us a great ROI from the investment in this facility by decreasing costs to the taxpayers, increasing yields to our producers, and increasing the beauty of our yards and cities, drawing in more tourists and residents to fill our ever increasing job market shortfalls.

Your decisions on this bill will have lasting and far reaching impacts on our state and, in all reality, the nation. Please understand the gravity of your choices, and I hope you chose to approve the funding of this bill and of the New Ag Field Lab Facility.

Thank you for your consideration and for all that you do for this state.

Respectfully,

Erik Laber
Jamestown City Forester