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**Testimony of  
Matt Perdue  
North Dakota Farmers Union  
Before the  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
March 22, 2023**

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Chairman Bekkedahl and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 1379. My name is Matt Perdue, and I am testifying on behalf of North Dakota Farmers Union's (NDFU) members.

NDFU supports HB 1379. We specifically want to highlight the County and Township Bridge Fund and the Agriculture Diversification and Development fund. These two funds are important for supporting the long-term success of North Dakota's family farmers and ranchers.

**County and Township Bridge Fund**

A strong network of rural roads and bridges is critical to the success of family farmers and ranchers and to North Dakota's commodity-driven economy. Unfortunately, many of our rural roads and bridges are in significant need of investment. That need is most urgent when it comes to county and township bridges.

According to the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute (UGPTI), 698 county, township and tribal bridges need to be replaced in the next 20 years. The cost of those replacements and additional maintenance totals \$716 million over the 20-year period. Because many of these projects are urgent needs, UGPTI's analysis calls for \$139 million per biennium over the next 10 years.<sup>1</sup>

We appreciate the important steps the legislature took to address our rural infrastructure challenges during the 2021 legislative session and special session. However, without significant, routine investments, we will continue to fall behind. The County and Township Bridge Fund addresses that need.

**Agriculture Diversification and Development Fund**

The ADD Fund supports new and expanding value-added businesses through interest buydowns and grants. Since its establishment in 2021, the program has supported a wide variety of projects, including meat processors, craft maltsters, ethanol plants, pea flour processing, and more. Each of these projects create new jobs, grow the state's economy, and create new opportunities for family farmers and ranchers.

HB 1276, which separately addresses funding for the ADD Fund, also makes an important policy change. That bill includes an Agriculture Infrastructure Fund as a new subprogram under the ADD

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<sup>1</sup> Dybing, A., et. al. (2022, Sep. 1). *Infrastructure Needs: North Dakota's County, Township, and Tribal Roads and Bridges: 2022-2041*. NDSU Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute. Retrieved from [https://www.ugpti.org/downloads/road\\_needs/2021-2023-legislative-study-report.pdf](https://www.ugpti.org/downloads/road_needs/2021-2023-legislative-study-report.pdf).



Fund. The Ag Infrastructure Fund will help political subdivisions and utility providers address infrastructure needs associated with new development. It fills an important need as we continue to promote agriculture processing and livestock development. Whether this committee chooses to address the ADD fund and Ag Infrastructure Fund through this bill or HB 1276, we believe they are important pieces of North Dakota's development strategy.

NDFU respectfully requests a "Do Pass" recommendation on HB 1379. I will stand for any questions.