February 2, 2023, Agriculture and Veteran's Affairs Committee

Chairman Luick and members of the Committee,

My name is Tim Mathern. I am a former farm boy who has now lived in Fargo for over 50 years. In recent past winters, I saw mounds of field dirt along the north fence line on I-94. I saw payloaders move dirt off the highway and rest area between Edgeley and Jamestown on Highway 281. This prompted me to get interested in soil conservation and to introduce SB 2323.

As you can see by the LC number, the bill has gone through 5 iterations, starting out as an appropriation for equipment, then buildings, then oversight, and now to be a report to Legislative Management. There was also some concern about the appropriate way to address this issue too, through NDSU, North Dakota Extension Service, SBARE, or a stand-alone bill.

After a number of discussions, it was clear that there are many needs within the soil conservation entities around the state. Staff, buildings, infrastructure, software, and equipment are some of the most important. It seemed appropriate to take some time to come up with a well-researched proposal that covers a full decade. The best way to do that is to give the people closest to the need a clear request from the legislature to make this assessment and come back to us with a report we can work with and fund in the next legislative session.

The bill directs the North Dakota State University Extension Service to do this study and make the report. If you feel that the Service needs extra funding to do this, please add an appropriation to cover that. You might consider an amount that is less than $50,000 to escape the referral process to the Appropriations Committee!

Let's protect our most important natural asset, our soil. I ask for a Do Pass recommendation on SB2353.

Thank you for your consideration.

Senator Tim Mathern