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**Testimony of
Matt Perdue
North Dakota Farmers Union
Before the
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
March 17, 2023**

Chairman Patten and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 1135. My name is Matt Perdue, and I am testifying on behalf of North Dakota Farmers Union's (NDFU) members.

NDFU supports HB 1135, which would prevent foreign governments or state-controlled enterprises from acquiring agricultural land in North Dakota. NDFU's member-driven Policy & Action supports "restricting foreign individuals and entities from owning land in North Dakota."

As of December 2021, foreign investors' holdings of U.S. agricultural land totaled 40.8 million acres – an acreage nearly equal to the size of North Dakota. Since 2012, foreign ownership of U.S. agricultural land has increased by 14 million acres. Most of that increase – 47 percent – was due to growth in cropland ownership by foreign entities. In fact, foreign ownership of U.S. cropland has nearly doubled since 2012.¹

In North Dakota, 356,490 acres are currently held by foreign owners. That number has increased by nearly 240% over the last 10 years. While nationally, forest makes up the largest percentage of U.S. ownership, in North Dakota, the vast majority of foreign-owned lands are cropland and pastureland.²

It is clear that foreign individuals and entities have a growing interest in acquiring U.S. agricultural land. We believe foreign ownership of agricultural land presents a threat to food security. That threat is compounded by foreign ownership of some of our country's largest food processors, especially in the meat processing industry. Food security threats are greatest when foreign governments acquire U.S. land directly or through state-owned enterprises. HB 1135 addresses that concern.

We respectfully request a "Do Pass" on HB 1135. I will stand for any questions.

¹ Estep, M., et. al. (n.d.) *Foreign Holdings of U.S. Agricultural Land Through December 31, 2021*. United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency. Retrieved from https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/EPAS/PDF/2021_afida_annual_report_through_12_31_2021.pdf; Johnson, L. A., Feather, C. A., & Schultz, L. (n.d.) *Foreign Holdings of U.S. Agricultural Land Through December 31, 2021*. United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency. Retrieved from <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/EPAS/PDF/afida2012report.pdf>.

² *Id.*