

Good Afternoon, Senators.

Before we begin, my sister and I would like to recite the 4H Pledge.

I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living, for my club, my community, my country, and my world.

My name is Emelyn Herman from Mandan. I am a proud member of the Morton County 4-H Program. I am standing before you today much younger and much less experienced. But I was taught that when something matters, you stand up for it, even if your voice is the smallest in the room.

I want to advocate for kids across North Dakota who work hard and pour their hearts into their fair exhibits. I believe that dedication should be rewarded, that effort should be recognized, and that dreams, no matter how small, deserve to be supported.

The premiums are more than just money. They are a symbol of hard work, dedication, and lessons we carry with us long after the fair is over. It's the early mornings and late nights, the hours spent perfecting our projects, and the sacrifices we made along the way. Whether it's raising livestock, growing crops, baking, or crafting an exhibit, these projects aren't just hobbies. They are a way for us to learn, grow, and take pride in what we create. Without 4-H, I wouldn't have learned how to raise farm animals or how to build a fishing pole.

My Uncle Vern Herman taught me how to build this fishing pole, but what he really gave me was something far more valuable than just a rod and reel. This pole represents tradition and craftsmanship. But more than that, this project sent ripples through our community. Let me explain.

On the way to the State Fair, my family stopped to fill up at a local gas station in rural North Dakota. When we arrived in Minot, we checked into a hotel, explored the fairgrounds, cheered at events, and enjoyed food from the trucks. And like any good fair experience, we spent more than we should have trying to win a stuffed animal. The \$200 we invested in that fishing pole didn't just go toward making the pole itself. It helped generate nearly \$500 for North Dakota's economy.

The impact didn't stop there. Since then, I have since convinced two families from the Mandan Soccer Club to take a trip to Pick City for a rod-building class. That means more business for the rod builder, more fuel purchased at Scott's Conoco, and more dinners shared at Little's Restaurant. One fishing pole. One project. One fair exhibit. It all adds up to something much bigger.

Because of this pole, I am learning and perfecting skills that will last a lifetime. I am discovering what it means to build something with my own hands, to take pride in my work, and to inspire others to do the same. With your support, more kids like me will have the chance to learn, create, and turn small beginnings into something that strengthens families, communities, and businesses across North Dakota.

Thank you for your time. Would anyone like to see my fishing pole?