



Testimony  
**Senate Appropriations - Education and Environment Division**  
**Senate Bill 2003**  
January 21, 2025

Chairman Sorvaag and members of the Senate Appropriations - Education and Environment Division Committee. The Valley Prosperity Partnership (VPP) is a membership organization led by business executives – joined by economic development, chamber of commerce, and higher education leaders – to advance and advocate for shared strategic economic development opportunities for the Red River Valley region and for North Dakota.

The business executives who lead companies across the state of North Dakota that comprise the VPP desire to strengthen and diversify our economy. They understand that investing in research and development is critical to insuring a robust and prosperous future for all North Dakotans.

North Dakota's universities and colleges are important economic drivers, whose research and development capabilities sustain our competitive advantages and translate innovations into new economic opportunities, a more skilled workforce, and higher-paying jobs for North Dakotans.

In 2023 the legislature had the vision to create and support the Economic Diversification Research Fund (EDRF) by allocating \$2.5 million to UND, NDSU, and the 9 primarily undergraduate institutes (PUIs). The vision was to create a substantial industry presence in North Dakota that does not exist today through university innovation, partnerships, and technology transfer, whether it is to build upon our existing economic base or by attracting new talent and ideas that are outside of ag & energy.

Considerable work has been done over the last two years to create a strong foundation for realizing that vision. To maximize the vision and legislative intent of EDRF, increased support will be needed. Consequently, the VPP strongly supports increasing the funding for EDRF to \$25 million in the next biennium.

Thank you for your consideration of these important investments in research and development that will lead to new innovations and enable the expansion of opportunity and prosperity in North Dakota.

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