

Honorable Chairman Wanzek and Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee -
Government Operations Division,

My name is Bob Martin from Jamestown, ND, and I serve as Chair of the State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC). In this role, I witness the immense value that NDSU Extension programs and Soil Conservation Districts (SCDs) bring to communities across North Dakota. Today, I am writing to express my support for SB 2020.

The funds allocated to the SSCC through SB 2020 are a lifeline for SCDs across the state. These funds enable districts to provide vital technical assistance and conservation planning directly to residents, creating tangible, locally-led conservation impacts in every corner of North Dakota. Moreover, many SCDs effectively leverage these state funds as matching dollars for federal grants, multiplying their impact and ensuring a robust return on investment.

The conservation work carried out by SCDs is transformative for North Dakota. Using the District Activity Reporting Tool (DART), we have documented remarkable achievements. In the first three quarters of 2024 alone SCDs:

- Delivered conservation and agricultural literacy educational programs to over 16,000 K-12 students and almost 100 college students, fostering a new generation of environmentally conscious leaders.
- Seeded more than 2,800 acres of cover crops and over 4,000 acres of grasslands, enhancing soil health, livestock forage, and wildlife habitats.
- Installed more than 600 miles of weed barriers and planting nearly 37,000 trees by hand, contributing to erosion control and ecological stability.
- Hosted workshops, programs, and field days that engaged over 5,400 participants, promoting sustainable agricultural practices.
- Conducted more than 250 hours of soil testing and over 350 hours of soil mapping to empower agricultural producers with actionable insights.
- Provided 335 field visits and dedicated more than 3,100 hours to delivering conservation technical assistance directly to producers.

These achievements are just a snapshot of the critical work SCDs accomplish to preserve our state's most valuable natural resources: our soil and water. With your support for an enhanced operating budget, SCDs can expand these impactful programs and address the growing conservation needs of our state.

I urge you to recognize the invaluable role SCDs play in sustaining North Dakota's natural and agricultural resources. Your investment in SB 2020 is an investment in the future resilience and prosperity of our communities.

Thank you for your dedication to our great state and for considering this important legislation.

Bob Martin
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