

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee

I'm Dwight Grotberg from Wimbledon, North Dakota. I own and operate a grain farm in Barnes County. I'm here today to express support for HB 1176, but strongly urge that the bill be amended to address two major issues:

1. The unfair agricultural property burden North Dakota's farmers are bearing.

Our farm of 8,500 acres owns land and it also cash rents land from other landowners. We currently cash rent a little more land than we own. **In 2024, our property tax bill was more than \$50,000 on the land that we own.** Then there is the land that we rent. We have heard the argument that out of state agricultural landowners are paying property taxes, and they are. I have several out of state landowners that I rent farmland from. Every 2-3 years when it is time to re-negotiate these cash rent contracts, the conversation about rising property taxes comes up, and so do my cash rent rates. The out of state landowner writes the check for the property taxes on their land, but it comes directly out of the pockets of producers like me first. With that in mind, **our farm actually contributes more than \$100,000 annually in property taxes**, when you add the additional rent paid to cover the landowners property taxes.

2. The disparity between townships in both revenue collections and expenditures.

Our farm operates mostly in Barnes County, and in 8 different townships. Most of these townships are always broke, and revert to deferred maintenance for roads, no winter maintenance, or complete closure or abandonment. We have fields that we cannot get to without driving on a neighbor's property, yet we are assessed the same tax rates on the inaccessible property as we are the fields with good road access. Some of these townships have either a higher population base, or some industry, or both, and have collections of property taxes way over their expenditures and have large cash reserves.

We would ask that this bill includes some language to address this issue.

Summary: We urge a do-pass recommendation for HB 1176 with amendments to address the concerns that I mentioned. An incremental approach to reduce property taxes that this bill provides should include North Dakota's farmers as well.

I stand for any questions.