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**Testimony of
Matt Perdue
North Dakota Farmers Union
Before the
Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee
January 17, 2025**

Chairman Luick and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 2097. My name is Matt Perdue, and I am testifying on behalf of North Dakota Farmers Union's members. NDFU supports SB 2097.

During our most recent annual convention, our members adopted a list of priorities for this legislative session. Included in that list investments in childcare, rural food access, affordable housing, and rural economic development. Our members recognize that the future of agriculture is strongly connected to quality of life in rural communities. We strongly support investments in our rural communities.

SB 2097 establishes a Rural Community Endowment Fund to support communities with a population of fewer than 1,000 residents. Interest from the fund would be used to address housing, workforce, infrastructure, economic development and other community needs. The legislation requests a significant investment of \$50 million.

We recognize there are ongoing conversations about how to best invest in our rural communities. We do not have strong opinions on the best format or vehicle for these critical investments. We simply encourage the committee to focus on how we support rural North Dakota, not if we make that commitment.

We respectfully request a "Do Pass" recommendation on SB 2097. I will stand for any questions.