



U.S. Durum Growers Association

PROMOTING THE PRODUCTION AND MARKETING OF DURUM AND SEMOLINA

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**Testimony of Steve Perdue
President
SB 2161
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Chairman Luick and members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee, my name is Steve Perdue, and I'm a farmer from Ray and serve as the President of the U.S. Durum Growers Association (USDGA). On behalf of the USDGA, we support SB 2161 because of the importance of sustaining and growing the wheat industry through the vital North Dakota Wheat Commission (NDWC) research, marketing, and communication.

USDGA has served to promote the production and marketing of durum wheat and semolina since 1978. The association represents grower and industry members from 10 states. We have many members from North Dakota as the acres produced in the state account for just over half of the country's durum production. Due to durum's hardness, density, high protein, and color it is milled into semolina which is ideal for use in premium pasta.

SB 2161 increases the wheat assessment from the rate of 15 mills per bushel to 20 mills per bushel, which at a dollar amount would amount to \$0.02. This assessment has not risen since 2005, making it below current inflation for daily operation of vital programs, as well as below other state assessment rates. USDGA supports aligning with these other state assessments as we see other states that produce durum at a higher rate such as Montana at 25 mills per bushel.

Additionally, as North Dakota continues to be a leading state in wheat production, it's vital to the sustainability of the industry to further invest in research and domestic and international marketing to maintain competitiveness in an increasingly competitive market. It's critical to the industry's future to increase communication and public education on the process of assessments, the production of wheat to the next generation, as well as increasing producer education for more profitable production through new research and educational opportunities.

Thank you for the opportunity to present USDGA's support for SB 2161. USDGA believes an assessment increase will support the future of wheat production by furthering research, expanding in an increasing competitive market, communicating the importance of wheat to various audiences, and aligning with other wheat checkoffs.