

**TESTIMONY OF  
NICHOLAS FLOM  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NORTHERN PLAINS UAS TEST SITE  
BEFORE THE  
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS – EDUCATION & ENVIRONMENT DIVISION  
MARCH 17, 2021  
SENATE BILL NO. 2018**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am Nicholas Flom, Executive Director of the Northern Plains Unmanned Aircraft Systems Test Site (NPUASTS). I have been the Executive Director since November of 2016 and have been a part of the Test Site since early 2014. I am testifying today in support of the Governor’s funding request for the Unmanned Aircraft Systems Program under the Department of Commerce.

The current request, passed by the North Dakota Senate, is for \$3,000,000 in new funding to support the continuation of the UAS Test Site program and carryover authority from the 2019-2021 biennium. The funding would be able to support the FAA’s UAS Test Site Program, FAA’s BEYOND Program, support to state agencies and promotion and advocacy of UAS in North Dakota.

**APPROPRIATIONS**

- \$3,000,000 from General Fund
- \$7,020,150 (Other Funds) Authority to spend from Federal contracts
- \$1,000,000 (Other Funds) Authority to spend from Private contracts

**THE HISTORY**

- Since 2013, the State of North Dakota has invested \$11,943,620 into the NPUASTS.
- Since 2013, NPUASTS has been awarded external contracts worth \$7,200,000 with \$5,600,000 being awarded during this current biennium.

**PROGRAM RECOGNITION**

- The NPUASTS has been awarded Federal contracts during this biennium from CBP, DHS, DOD, FAA, and NASA.
- Selected with the North Dakota Department of Transportation as one of 10 participants in the FAA’s UAS Integration Pilot Program.
- Selected with the North Dakota Department of Transportation as one of eight participants in the FAA’s BEYOND Program.

**BENEFITS TO THE STATE**

- The Mercatus Center at George Mason University released on January 14, 2021 a 50 state report card outlining “Which States Are Prepared for the Drone Industry”. North Dakota was ranked #1, and a major contributor to our ranking was the NPUASTS.

- The NPUASTS paid subcontractors \$2,444,324 to support our flight activity this current biennium, with 100% of those funds coming from external sources. Of the 20 subcontractors, 16 were from the state of North Dakota.
- The NPUASTS has supported flight activity at Grand Sky, University of North Dakota, Camp Grafton, and runs the program office for Vantis.