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House Appropriations Committee

Hearing Nov. 9, 2021

Testimony of Dave Lang, North Dakota Water Users Association

Good afternoon, Chairman Delzer and members of the House Appropriations Committee. I am Dave Lang and I serve as the President of the North Dakota Water Users Association. Thank you for your hard work over the last month developing SB 2345. The North Dakota Water Users Association supports the appropriation of \$75 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for water projects through SB 2345. We also support the clarifying language offered by the Senate regarding use of these dollars.

The Water Users Association was organized in 1959 to protect, develop, and manage North Dakota's water resources. It is currently comprised of over 300 local, statewide and regional organizations in North Dakota who have an active interest in water. We work closely with many North Dakota water organizations regarding funding needs and priorities. Collaboration is essential in meeting the water resource management needs of North Dakota.

Despite the generosity of the legislature this spring in funding water projects, there are still unmet needs. Whether for water supply, flood control, irrigation, or other water needs, there are projects across the state that could and will put ARPA funding to work. Projects under construction or close to construction have been especially hard hit by increased prices and supply chain challenges. ARPA funding, above the Resources Trust Fund dollars previously allocated, will help projects pay for price increases due to inflation and save the state dollars in the long run by moving up the timeframe for project completion.

The North Dakota Water Users appreciates the conversation regarding water funding and the Resources Trust Fund that has accompanied the committee's work on ARPA funding. Water projects across the state were adversely impacted by the funding issues created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The situation highlighted areas for possible improvement with the current system for funding water projects. We appreciate the language added to the bill by the Senate Appropriations committee directing a study of this important issue. We would ask that you would support the language added by the Senate and stand ready to work with the Water Topics committee in advance of the 2023 session.

Thank you.