

From: Taya Spelhaug

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Subject: Support for NDSU Extension

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Taya Spelhaug. I'm a resident of West Fargo, a member of the NDSU Extension Citizens Advisory Council and the TechSpark Manager of North Dakota at Microsoft. Thank you for the opportunity to share my personal story about 4-H and my support of Senate Bill 2020.

When you Bing the word "4-H", a simple explanation of the organization pops up. *"4-H hands-on learning and education programs for kids build skills like responsibility, resiliency and hard work, which help them succeed in life."*

I grew up on a farm outside Kindred, ND and 4-H was a prominent part of our community. My mother had served as a 4-H camp nurse and my older brother was a 4-H member as well. When I turned 8 years old, I was thrilled to join our local 4-H club and I stayed involved through High School. Looking back on my childhood, those 10 years in 4-H played a big role in shaping who I am today, and instilled in me those three skills that have helped me succeed in life – *responsibility, resiliency, and hard work.*

Let me give you examples of how 4-H helped me develop those critical skills:

- Responsibility: Whether it's volunteering to clean the highway ditch by my hometown town, preparing for a meeting because I had been elected the president of their club, or having to run out to the barn in the dead of night in my pjs because I forgot to feed the sheep... all these experiences taught me to take responsibility not only for my wellbeing, but for those of others.
- Resiliency: This in another word is grit... which is a huge buzz words these days. If a child can learn to overcome obstacles, whether it's in a leadership activity at a 4-H camp or simply learning how to deal with getting a red ribbon on their cookies at the fair like I did, they will carry that grit far into their adulthood. And in a year like we had in 2020, this virtue of resiliency played a big role in my life.
- Hard work: 4-H is all about learning by doing and most of the time the doing isn't easy. I saw the value of my hard work when I

volunteer in my community, lead a local club or won Grand Champion Junior Showman at Achievements days. 4-H'ers work... and they work hard.

These are just 3 of the many life lessons kids develop throughout their time in 4-H, but as you can see these three are extremely important to the overall growth of a child and will lead to a successful future.

4-H is critical to helping our North Dakota kids advance in these and other areas. The 4-H program provides hands-on, real-life experiences to more than 6,300 youth in clubs assisted by 2,183 volunteers. More than 30,000 youth are reached on an annual basis through 4-H activities. Also, 4-H youth are four times more likely to contribute to their communities. Communities in which you live and serve.

With the state's financial shortfalls in the past several biennia, NDSU Extension funding has been severely reduced and that can't continue. I am here today to ask you to restore the NDSU's Extensions Budget a wipe out the governors 15% reduction. A reduction that would eliminate 20 extension positions and most likely affect those 4-H members in your districts. I hope you will support the "needs based budget" before you today and help 4-H grow its programs and continue to shape future generations of North Dakotans. Thank you for your time and consideration.