

**North Dakota Stockmen's Association
Testimony to the
Senate Appropriations Committee on HB 1020
March 2, 2023**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Senate Appropriations Committee members. For the record, my name is Julie Ellingson and I represent the North Dakota Stockmen's Association, a 93-year-old beef cattle trade organization comprised of more than 3,100 cattle-ranching families from across the state.

We join with our agricultural colleagues in enthusiastic support of HB 1020. It represents critically important programs and projects that were prioritized by the State Board of Agricultural Research and Education through its comprehensive process. Agriculture is our state's economic engine, and these research and Extension efforts help keep our industry and our state strong, and we appreciate all your past support.

We recognize the major tasks you have ahead of you as you prioritize needs and allocate funds for the next biennium. As you weigh those important decisions, we urge you to keep in mind the state's return-on-investment when you invest in ag research and Extension endeavors. This budget can help bolster the state's primary economic driver; leverage matching dollars from industry and private investors; and generate more tax dollars that will result from agriculture's prosperity.

The package before you has value from top to bottom. There are three elements I want to specifically call out:

First, from a cattle rancher's vantage point, the cropping systems initiative and its weed control focus are of particular interest. Not only are herbicide-resistant weed populations expanding, but newcomers like the dreaded Palmer Amaranth threaten our landscape and we want to get ahead of them to protect our crop, hay and rangelands and preserve their productivity.

Second, the no. 2 livestock development initiative is also one of timely significance. It not only dovetails nicely with the work our organization has been doing the past 21 years to site and support new and expanding cattle feeding operations in North Dakota, but it can help producers take advantage of existing and new value-added processing facilities in our state, including the three upcoming soybean crushing plants. Livestock development, as you know, has been an important topic of discussion this legislative session and this initiative will augment other work being done in the policy arena.

Third, in order to have a robust agricultural industry, you need robust agricultural workers, and the farm and ranch safety and health initiative will help ensure that our hands-down no. 1 ag commodity – our farmers, ranchers and agribusiness people – have the necessary resources to thrive and do their work providing food and fiber for the world.

Thank you for your consideration of these priorities and for all the support you have provided to help keep agriculture strong. I would be happy to take any questions you might have.