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**Testimony of
Matt Perdue
North Dakota Farmers Union
Before the
Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee
February 2, 2023**

Chairman Luick and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Senate Bill No. 2037. My name is Matt Perdue, and I am testifying on behalf of North Dakota Farmer Union's (NDFU) members. NDFU opposes SB 2037, because it imposes an untested mandate on landowner-driven drainage projects and compromises local control.

NDFU's Policy & Action supports "the authority of water resource districts to create, construct, operate, manage, maintain and improve legal assessment drains." During our recent annual convention, our members approved a special order of business outlining key priorities for this legislative session. Among those priorities, our members urged the legislature to streamline regulations governing water drainage projects. We appreciate the work of the Water Drainage Committee and support SB 2036. However, we believe SB 2037 is a step in the wrong direction.

Farmers, ranchers and landowners are the drivers of assessment projects. SB 2037 requires water resource districts to follow an economic model, not the wishes of local landowners. We are concerned that this would dilute the voice of landowners in what should be a locally led process.

We are also concerned that SB 2037 will make water management more difficult. SB 2037 would make assessment projects more complex and longer to develop. Furthermore, the proposed economic analysis is untested. There is currently no practical use of parcel-by-parcel economic analysis in the state.

NDFU respectfully requests a "Do Not Pass" recommendation on SB 2037. Thank you for your consideration. I will stand for any questions.