



Testimony of Nathan Schneider
Economic Development Association of North Dakota
In Support of HB 1009
January 30, 2025

Chairman Monson and members of the House Appropriations - Government Operations Division:

My name is Nathan Schneider, and I am Vice President of Economic Development for the Bismarck Mandan Chamber EDC and serve as the Secretary/Treasurer for the Economic Development Association of North Dakota (EDND). It is in the capacity of an EDND board member that I provide support today. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1009, the North Dakota Ag Department's budget bill, specifically supporting the continued funding for the Ag Products Utilization Commission (APUC) grant program. This program is a vital initiative that promotes early-stage uses of agricultural products and fosters economic development in our state.

Agriculture has long been a cornerstone of our economy, providing food, raw materials, and employment for countless families. However, the challenges facing the agricultural sector, including fluctuating commodity prices, climate variability, and evolving market demands—necessitate innovative approaches to maximize the value of agricultural products. APUC plays a critical role in addressing these challenges by supporting research, product development, and exploratory initiatives at the earliest stages of innovation.

Continued investment in this program directly contributes to economic development in several ways:

- **Value-Added Products:** The program supports early-stage projects that explore transforming raw agricultural commodities into higher-value products, creating new potential revenue streams for farmers and producers.
- **Job Creation:** By fostering innovation and entrepreneurship from the ground up, the grant program helps generate employment opportunities in rural and urban communities alike.
- **Market Exploration:** Grants have enabled local businesses to test and develop emerging ideas, laying the groundwork for future market entry and increased competitiveness of our agricultural sector both domestically and internationally.
- **Supporting Innovation:** Innovation is essential to the long-term viability of our agricultural economy. By providing the necessary resources for early-stage research and development, this grant program empowers farmers, researchers, and businesses to explore new ideas and pilot projects that address emerging challenges and seize future opportunities.

- **Strengthening Rural Communities:** Rural areas often face unique economic challenges. This program has proven instrumental in revitalizing these communities by promoting entrepreneurship, fostering early innovation, and encouraging resilience and adaptability.

In closing, continued funding for APUC is essential for maintaining the momentum of early-stage agricultural innovation and economic development in our state. The program's proven track record, over the past 40 years of fostering value-added products, job creation, and exploratory market development demonstrates its importance as a strategic investment in our agricultural economy.

On behalf of the Economic Development Association of North Dakota and its over 110 members that represent economic development organizations and private sector businesses, I respectfully urge you to support the continued funding of this invaluable program.