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**Lance Gaebe on behalf of  
North Dakota Farmers Union  
Testimony in Support of SB 2020  
House Appropriations Committee -Government Operations Division  
March 11, 2025**

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Chairman Monson and members of the Government Operations Division, my name is Lance Gaebe. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of North Dakota Farmers Union members. To ensure the continued vitality of North Dakota agriculture, we support Senate Bill No. 2020, the budget bill for the NDSU research, extension, and associated entities.

We want to thank the Legislature, and particularly this committee, for the strong support for the NDSU Agricultural Experiment Station (AES) and Extension Service. The legislature's recent support for the Peltier Complex and the Bolley Agricultural Laboratory will bolster NDSU's ability to provide cutting edge research and improve farmers' and ranchers' access to that information and value.

We encourage the committee to fully fund the operating support outlined in SBARE's priorities. The investments the legislature has made in facilities at NDSU, and the AES create major opportunities for North Dakota agriculture, and Extension professionals help share the information gained. To capitalize on opportunities, these programs need baseline funding and adequate operating resources.

Base Budget Restoration and Operating Support

NDFU supports the list of SBARE ranked options, but our top priority is to restore baseline funding for the AES main station and the Extension Service. The proposed 3% cut to the Main Station will cause the loss of key staff, compromise critical research projects hindering farmers' access to essential information. Furthermore, the cumulative 4.7% cut to the Extension Service will critically impair its ability to deliver vital educational programs and on-the-ground support. We strongly encourage this committee to restore baseline funding.

Moreover, we encourage the committee to invest in the operating support required in SBARE's priorities. Sufficient operating support will help the AES and NDSU Extension hire and develop qualified staff in an increasingly competitive job market. Increased operating support will also help the AES and NDSU Extension keep up with rising costs. Operating support will benefit the entire system, including current and future initiatives.



We also continue to support SBARE's priority list. We want to highlight two key priorities for NDFU: the Center for Agricultural Policy and Trade Studies and Biofuels and Carbon Management.

#### Center for Agricultural Policy and Trade Studies

North Dakota agriculture plays a unique role in global agricultural markets. We lead the United States in production of 13 commodities and rank in the top five in eight more commodities. Our land-locked state is dependent on rail transportation and trans-Pacific trade; thus, we are uniquely impacted by domestic and international trade policy.

Moreover, the rapidly changing and increasingly uncertain global trade environment is creating new challenges for North Dakota producers. Tariffs, retaliation, and limited market access create new barriers to export of North Dakota's agriculture products. It is imperative for decision-makers to have access to objective research on the impact trade decisions have on North Dakota farmers and ranchers.

Enhancing the CAPTS center will provide analysis of the unique impacts domestic and trade policy on North Dakota farms, ranches, and related agribusinesses. It will also help North Dakota agriculture navigate the growing complexities of the global trade environment. We recommend the funding of three new positions: an agricultural policy analyst, a markets and trade analyst, and an economic impact specialist to help to provide comprehensive agricultural, valuation, trade, and policy analyses.

#### Biofuels and Carbon Management

Pressure is growing to reduce carbon emissions in agriculture and fuel markets. A combination of policy and market forces are transforming the economics of renewable fuels production. This shift could create new opportunities for agriculture producers.

Producers need more objective, science-based information to guide their decision making to adopt to the new market dynamics. We encourage the legislature to support the Biofuels and Carbon Management priority and the Extension Biofuels and Carbon Initiative. These two proposals will help provide the research and educate farmers and ranchers on how capitalize on new market opportunities and effectively navigate policy challenges.

#### Conclusion

I want to thank this committee for its strong commitment to NDSU research and extension efforts. Our members deeply appreciate your support for these critical investments. Again, we strongly encourage the committee to restore the baseline budget and prioritize operating support for the AES and NDSU Extension. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I will stand for any questions.