

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the House Appropriations Committee.

My name is Austen Schauer, District 13, West Fargo.

Today, I am here to advocate for the continued growth and development of the **Research & Technology Park**, located in Fargo.

This is not just a request for funding; it is an investment in the future of North Dakota where we lead and excel in bringing advanced automation and robotics to agriculture, military and energy markets.

The **Research & Tech Park** is more than 20 years old and has helped grow two large precision ag companies: Deere and Appareo (now acquired by AGCO) along with dozens of successful start-up companies such as Elinor Coatings, Bushel, OmniByte, Be More Colorful, Trilogy, Aigen, and Isight Drone Services.

The Park has a solid foundation to **build on** for the future.

A new business model has been determined under new leadership based on new opportunities.

The goal is to convert research discoveries into commercial products that support the needs of ag industry and military.

The Park's business model emphasizes three key areas:

- **Developing intelligent autonomous mobile equipment, essentially advanced automation and robotics.**
- **Connecting top engineers and research in six specific tech areas to meet the needs of ag industry and military.**
- **Bridge the needs of the global marketplace with technologies to solve problems.**

But will this business model work? The answer is, yes.

Consider Carnegie Mellon's National Robotics Engineering Center (NREC) in Pittsburgh.

It conducts rapid proof-of-concept and in-depth development and testing. Over the last 30 years, this business model has generated more than \$800m in revenue.

Consider similar business models at Stanford Research Institute and Purdue University.

Stanford has produced more than 13 thousand patents, many of which have turned into commercial products.

Purdue, last summer, opened a manufacturing innovation and test center which takes products directly into the private sector. It goes well beyond prototypes.

Once the business model was established, Park leadership turned its attention to **market focus**.

The Park can't be everything to everyone, so it's *leaning* into the strengths of North Dakota, focusing on precision agriculture and defense markets.

The technical problems that exist in making ground and air systems work seamlessly are the same in precision ag and defense. That according to the Park's CEO **Brenda Wyland** and CTO **Josh Gelinske** who have worked for many years in both industries.

To solve technical issues in precision ag and defense, and to market those solutions, the Park is building a team of engineers to focus on: **Advanced Materials, Robotics, Computational Sciences, Connectivity, Sensing, and AI**.

The effort is already paying off as the Research Park and Carnegie Mellon Robotics Center in Pittsburg have entered a letter of intent and are in the process of working through a collaborative joint agreement.

The associate director of the Robotics Center, **Jeff Lagault**, testified in person at our GVA hearing.

It is a win-win partnership allowing the Park to figure out the **IP strategy** to engage with the commercial ag market and military, all of which will accelerate vision and success.

Also testifying in person was retired **Brigadier General James Cluff**, US Air Force who worked with Miss Wyland in the private sector. He gave his full endorsement of this project.

The Research and Tech Park is **not** part of NDSU, but it can bridge the gap between university discovery and commercial products.

The Park is **not** in competition with Grand Sky, Grand Farm, Northern Plains UAS Test Site, or EERC but it can **leverage all** to bring more opportunities to the State.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, by no means is the current Research Park a failure. Today, more than 600 people work in the Park (at various businesses) with an average total salary of more than \$52 million.

However, with new leadership, new focus and a new mission, the goal is to be bigger, better, and more profitable.

How?

- **Royalties paid for intellectual property created by the Park.**
- **Revenue from engineering contracts with major global corporations, defense contractors, and fast growth companies to design, engineer and test advanced automation and robotics prototypes.**
- **Ground lease income paid by tenants in the Park with an existing or future location.**
- **Lease income paid by clients in the technology incubator.**

However, to unlock its full potential, the Park must invest in its infrastructure, industry experts, and the entrepreneurial environment that fosters new ideas.

This is where you can help.

By providing \$7.5m in grant money and an additional \$7.5 million in **one-to-one** matching funds, the Park can **dive deep** into bringing together academia, industry leaders, engineers, and investors to **accelerate** the commercialization of products to industry.

SB 2256 puts the oversight of State funding and reporting within the Industrial Commission and Legislative Management.

The funding is one-time only.

How best do we ensure our future in tech innovation, business growth, and educational excellence in North Dakota?

It happens with great leadership, necessary financial support, partnerships, and opportunity.

We believe these critical components are at the Research and Technology Park and with your support, we can take our place alongside Carnegie Mellon, Stanford Research Institute, and Purdue.

The Research Park plan is not aspirational; it is ready to be achieved.

I respectfully ask for your support with **SB 2256**.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Committee members.

I stand open for questions along with Park CEO Brendy Wyland.