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**Lance Gaebe on behalf of
North Dakota Farmers Union
Testimony in Support of HB 1218
House Energy and Natural Resources Committee
January 30, 2025**

Chairman Porter and members of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of North Dakota Farmers Union in support of House Bill No. 1218. My name is Lance Gaebe.

North Dakota Farmers Union members recognize the importance of effective water management in ensuring the long-term sustainability of our agricultural economy. Legal assessment drains and efficient water conveyance are essential to:

- Provide farmland drainage relief, safeguard crops and improve soil health.
- Enhance agricultural productivity and bolster the agriculture economy.
- Safeguard roads, bridges, and other vital infrastructure, reducing costly repairs and ensuring public safety.

We appreciate work of water resource districts to manage water movement and implement critical water conveyance projects. House Bill 1218 addresses key concerns regarding the current regulatory framework and cost share eligibility for water conveyance projects, it:

- Increases the State Water Commission economic analysis (EA) threshold to \$5 million to reduce bureaucratic hurdles for smaller, locally driven projects.
- Encourages a holistic evaluation of project impacts, including road infrastructure protection, community well-being, and public safety.
- Recognizes local authority and decision making to effectively assess and prioritize water management needs, particularly of projects that are locally supported and financed.

Current EA requirements for smaller projects impose significant delays and unnecessary costs on local districts, hindering timely implementation of critical drainage projects. HB 1218 will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of water management, reduce the administrative burden and help ensure that critical water projects can be implemented in a timely and cost-effective manner.

North Dakota Farmers Union urges this committee to support a do pass recommendation on HB 1218. I will answer questions.