



**North Dakota Grain Growers Association
Testimony in Support of HB 1280
Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee
March 6, 2025**

Chairman Luick, Members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee, for the record my name is Dan Wogsland representing the North Dakota Grain Growers Association. The North Dakota Grain Growers Association (NDGGA) appears before you today in support of House Bill No. 1280, which proposes amendments to North Dakota Century Code 61-16.1-45, relating to the maintenance of drainage projects.

Key Points of Support:

1. Ensuring Adequate Maintenance Funding:

- * HB 1280 addresses the critical need for consistent and sufficient funding for the maintenance of essential drainage infrastructure.
- * By allowing water resource boards to accumulate funds over a six-year period when annual levies are insufficient, the bill provides a mechanism to address larger, necessary maintenance projects.

2. Landowner Input and Accountability:

- * The bill maintains landowner input by requiring majority approval for projects exceeding the six-year levy accumulation.
- * Furthermore, the provision that landowners who have not paid required assessments cannot vote on obligating the district for costs reinforces financial responsibility and fairness.

3. Flexibility in Assessment Methods:

- * The bill preserves the existing flexibility for drainage districts to utilize either proportional assessments based on original benefits or uniform assessments across agricultural lands.
- * This provides local drainage boards with the ability to tailor assessment methods to the specific needs and circumstances of their districts.

4. Addressing Inflation and Increased Costs:

* Drainage projects are subject to the same increases in costs that all sectors of the economy face. The ability to save funds over a multi-year period is necessary to meet the increased costs.

5. Preserving Agricultural Productivity:

* Properly maintained drainage systems are vital for agricultural productivity in North Dakota. This bill ensures that these systems can be adequately maintained, contributing to the long-term health of our state's agricultural sector.

Why This Bill Matters:

* Farmers rely on effective drainage systems to manage water resources, optimize crop production, and protect their land.

* This legislation provides a practical and sustainable framework for maintaining these essential systems.

* This bill helps to prevent larger and more expensive repairs from being needed in the future.

In conclusion, NDGGA believes that House Bill No. 1280 is a responsible and necessary measure that will benefit North Dakota's agricultural community and ensure the long-term viability of our drainage infrastructure. Therefore, Chairman Luick, Members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee, NDGGA respectfully requests a Do Pass recommendation on HB 1280 and would urge the full Senate to concur.