

2025 HOUSE AGRICULTURE

HB 1591

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Agriculture Committee
Room JW327C, State Capitol

HB 1591
1/30/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the agriculture commissioner for a county fair resiliency grant program.

2:42 p.m. Chairman Beltz opened the meeting.

Members Present: Chairman Beltz, Vice Chairman Hauck, Representatives Anderson, Dobervich, Henderson, Holle, Hoverson, Kiefert, Nehring, Rios, Schreiber-Beck, Tveit, Vollmer

Member Absent: Representative Olson

Discussion Topics:

- Opportunity and renewal
- Tradition
- Stronger and resilient
- Matching funds
- 31 possible fair boards
- 4-H and Vocational Education
- Invaluable life experiences
- Future of youth and communities
- Ag Dept to develop the program
- Needs are many small and large

2:43 p.m. Representative Mitch Ostlie, District 12, Jamestown, ND, introduced, testified and submitted testimony #31619.

2:46 a.m. John Schneider, Business, Marketing and Industry Division Director, ND Department of Agriculture, testified in favor and submitted testimony #33057.

2:47 p.m. Matt Purdue, ND Farmers Union, testified in favor.

2:48 p.m. Pete Hanebutt, ND Farm Bureau, testified in favor.

2:48 p.m. Brand Brummond, Walsh County Fair Board, Park River, ND testified in favor and submitted testimony #32348.

2:46 p.m. Donald S. Jelsing, Vice President, Pierce County Fair, testified in favor and submitted testimony #32735.

3:06 p.m. Randy Schmidt, ND Stockmen's Association, testified in favor.

3:06 p.m. Mark Hafner, Mercer County Fair Board, testified in favor.

3:11 p.m. Rod Wilhelm, Board Member, Stutsman County Fair Board, testified in favor and submitted testimony #32670.

Additional written testimony:

Amilia Lillehaugen, Brocket ND, submitted testimony in favor #31341

Joan L. Wettlaufer, President, Bottineau County Fair, submitted testimony in favor #31800

Arleene R. Hansen, Lisbon, ND submitted testimony in favor #32093.

Trista L. Gemar, Fullerton, ND submitted testimony in favor #32156.

Paulette A. Laudert, Treasurer, Ransom County Fair, submitted testimony in favor #32191

Christopher S. Schauer, President, Adams County Fair Association, submitted testimony in favor #32262.

Amanda Helgland, Oberon, ND, submitted testimony in favor #32272.

Dr. Charly M. Stansbery, Veterinarian, 4H parent, Red Barn Veterinary Services, Sheldon, ND, submitted testimony in favor #32286.

Paul Klose, Walsh County 4-H Council, submitted testimony in favor #32361.

Dennis Skorheim, County Commissioner, Walsh County Commission, submitted testimony in favor #32486.

Emily Bivens, Executive Director, Jamestown Area Chamber of Commerce, submitted testimony in favor #32497.

Bernie Dardis, Mayor, City of West Fargo, ND, submitted testimony in favor #32503.

Brenda Kiser, 4-H Representative, Dickey County 4-H, submitted testimony in favor #32506.

Amanda J. Hastings, County Commissioner, Stutsman County Commissioners, submitted testimony in favor #32552.

Angela Rost, 4-H Program Assistant, NDSU Extension - Stutsman County, submitted testimony in favor #32584.

Beth T. Criswell, Bowman County Fair Association, submitted testimony in favor #32594.

Valerie Wagner, President, Dickey County Fair Board, submitted testimony in favor #32611.

Lily McFadden, Member, Slope County Fair Board, submitted testimony in favor #32624

Cale Dunwoody, Vice President of Public Policy, FMWF Chamber of Commerce, submitted testimony in favor #32695.

Diane K. Schell, President, McLean County Fair, submitted testimony in favor #32731.

Anna C. Ramsey, Secretary, Walsh County Fair Association, submitted testimony in favor #32743.

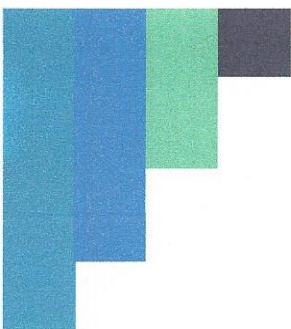
Mark S. Landa, Board Secretary, Greater Grand Forks Fair, submitted testimony in favor #32822.

Cody Cashman, CEO, Red River Valley Fair, submitted testimony in favor #32971.

Tony Grindberg, Cass County Commission (Cody Cashman), submitted testimony in favor #32972.

3:21 p.m. Chairman Beltz closed the meeting.

Diane Lillis, Committee Clerk

**Amilia Lillehaugen**5427 115th Avenue NE, Brocket, ND 58321

☎ 701-259-2158

✉ amilialillehaugen05@gmail.com

Dear House Agriculture Committee,

My name is Amilia Lillehaugen, and I am writing to express my strong support for HB 1591, which seeks to provide grant funding to 4-H fair board associations for much-needed building repairs and renovations. As an active 4-H member, I have witnessed firsthand the incredible impact that 4-H programs have on young people and their communities, and I believe this bill is essential to ensuring the continued success of this vital organization.

4-H has been a cornerstone of my personal growth and development. Through its programs, I have gained valuable leadership skills, learned the importance of community service, and developed confidence that will serve me for the rest of my life. 4-H provides a safe and supportive environment where young people like me can explore our interests, build meaningful relationships, and contribute to the betterment of our communities.

However, many of the facilities that host 4-H programs are in desperate need of repair and modernization. These spaces are more than just buildings—they are hubs of learning, collaboration, and innovation. When facilities are outdated or unsafe, it limits the opportunities for 4-H members to thrive. For example, I have personally experienced challenges with aging infrastructure in my local 4-H building, from structural issues that threaten the continuation of our local program, to inadequate heating in the winter, outdated facilities and technology that makes it difficult to fully participate in educational programs. Addressing these issues would not only enhance the experience for current members but also attract new participants and expand the reach of 4-H.

Investing in 4-H facilities is an investment in the future of our communities. The grant money proposed in this bill would empower 4-H fair board associations to make necessary repairs and upgrades, ensuring that these spaces remain functional and welcoming for generations to come. It would also demonstrate your commitment to supporting youth development and fostering strong, resilient communities.

I urge you to vote in favor of HB 1591 and to advocate for its passage. By doing so, you will be making a lasting difference in the lives of countless young people and helping to sustain a program that has positively impacted me and so many others. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Amilia Lillehaugen

HB 1591 County Fair Resiliency Grant

Good morning, Chairman Beltz, Vice-Chair Hauck and members of the House Ag committee. For the record, my name is Mitch Ostlie. Representative from District 12.

I am here today to introduce **HB 1591**. The County Fair Resiliency Grant Program represents a significant investment in the very heart of our traditions, bringing both opportunity and renewal to the places that serve as a gathering point for our families, neighbors, and visitors alike.

Our county fairs are more than just an event—it's a tradition that has been passed down for generations, bringing together people from all walks of life to celebrate agriculture, craftsmanship, entertainment, and community spirit. For many of us, the fair is a symbol of our rural heritage and a showcase for the hard work of our farmers, artisans, and youth.

But to ensure that the fairs continue to thrive and meet the needs of an evolving communities, we must invest in its infrastructure. Whether it's upgrading aging facilities, improving safety features, enhancing accessibility, or expanding amenities for visitors, these improvements are essential in keeping the fairgrounds vibrant, functional, and welcoming for years to come.

The County Fair Resiliency Grant Program is designed to provide financial support for these much-needed upgrades. Through this program, we will provide funding for projects that enhance the fairgrounds and improve the experience for fairgoers.

This grant program is an opportunity for us to partner with local organizations, nonprofits, and municipalities to bring our vision for a stronger, more resilient fairground to life. It's about preserving the rich history of our county fairs while ensuring that future generations can enjoy the same sense of pride and joy.

This grant would be administered by the ag commissioner. This office would develop the criteria for the application process, which I anticipate would have some type of matching contribution by the local associations.

This concludes my report and I encourage a do pass of HB 1591.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I will stand for any questions.

Chairman Beltz and Members of the House Agriculture Committee:

The Bottineau County Agriculture Society was established in 1889 as an association to help promote agriculture and livestock within our county. We are the oldest county fair in the State of North Dakota celebrating 135 years in 2024. The fair board is made up of volunteers from each district in the county for a total of 9 members, plus a secretary and a part-time maintenance worker. We hire high school/college students during the fair.

The fair has a long history of supporting 4-H and FFA. We currently have a building that is used during the fair to showcase the 4-H, FFA and open class static exhibits, along with commercial vendors, and it is where our fair "office" and two public restrooms are located. In the off-season this building is used for various auction sales, rummage sales, a fireworks stand, safety training for the NDSU Extension office, class reunions, occasional wedding dance, and during the winter a storage space for campers, boats/pontoons, and miscellaneous vehicles. Typically, each year we house 25-30 units.

The "Exhibit Hall" is one the last buildings that needs a makeover. The metal exterior is in rough shape, most of the sheets are damaged and lifting away from the structure, and the roof is deteriorating and leaking in our storage and display areas. The exterior doors need to be repainted or possibly replaced as they no longer seal when shut.

The Exhibit Hall is somewhat of a gathering point during the fair. We have tables and chairs set up for people to come in, sit down, get out of the sun or rain, cool down, and catch up with their neighbors and friends.

We have been slowly making updates to our property and buildings. The County does provide us with funds to help run the fair, buildings and grounds improvements. Our fair is usually the second week in June over Father's Day weekend. There are approximately 10-12 outside food and commercial vendors, plus two indoor food vendors hosted in one of our other buildings. Our fair hosts a two-day Junior Point Show on Friday and Saturday, which brings in 50-60 families that compete with their hogs, sheep, lambs, goats, and cattle. They camp, stay in our hotels, eat at our restaurants and fuel their vehicles before leaving town. The fair books anywhere from 15-20 rooms for entertainment, sound/lights for the bands, and miscellaneous acts (racing pigs, axe throwing, etc.). The hotel owners have indicated they are normally at capacity during the days up to and including the days of the fair. We have three hotels within city limits. I personally have driven around the city camping site at the park and all the spaces have been filled with campers/tents during the fair.

The week starts out with various 4-H, FFA and open class judging of static and animal projects. The fair officially opens Thursday morning with livestock judging of small and large animals, and for supper we provide a FREE meal for the public sponsored by local businesses but served by

our fair board. Our rodeo arena is used for barrel racing, rodeo and women's bronc riders. They are a nice attraction to the fair and use the various business and hotels throughout Bottineau during their stay.

Bottineau County Fair would not be successful without the cooperation and contributions given from people and businesses throughout the county and surrounding counties. There are not enough words to explain the appreciation we have for the city and county support we need to create the safe, fun-filled, family orientated event each June. The board has been fortunate to contract with a small carnival each year that provides approximately 10-12 rides for all ages, various games, and some food carts. The carnival employees use our local business to restock their supplies and fuel for the rides and equipment. Part of the funds we receive from the county are used to secure and pay the \$25,000 fee to have the carnival.

The board has been supportive of hiring bands from within our neighboring counties to provide our main stage or bar band music in our beer garden. These bands are fed using the local "church" stand or the family run stand in our indoor food booth. If the bands need a special diet, we will use our local restaurants. The city bars are asked to submit bids to be able to have the beer gardens during the fair on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

On Sunday we have a demolition derby in the afternoon that fills our grandstand and the area surrounding the arena where the derby is held. I'm guessing we will get 1500 plus people in attendance. We have had up to 40 vehicles vying for prize money. This event is run by volunteers on all levels, event coordinators, ambulance, firefighters, set-up and take-down crew, ring men to control each heat, etc. The large influx of families to the community helps the local businesses and gas stations. On Sunday we host a horse pull competition with small, medium and large horses. This provides great entertainment for all ages.

Bottineau County Fair bought a set of bleachers from the ND State Fair when they were doing their grandstand renovation. Our hope is to eventually put a cover on this seating. A bid received approximately five years ago was over \$250,000. So that may be put on hold for a bit!

Admission to the fair is a one-time cost, so once you enter, we do not charge another fee to attend the concerts or special attractions (rodeo, concert, derby, horse pull, etc.). We try to keep the cost for a family to be reasonable. We have two main gates where we hire Dakota College of Bottineau Foundation and Bottineau County Veterans to get workers and man the gates. These two groups in turn give back to their students and groups.

We have obtained bids to replace the tin on the Exhibit Hall. As of last fall, the cost of the tin was around \$35,000 from Bottineau Lumber in Bottineau, ND and labor is going to be at least that same amount. We have a local carpenter ready to complete the project. This building is 50 plus years old and has stood the test of time. The building is 60'x120' with 14' side walls.

The men's bathroom in the building needs to replace some of the pipes to help with water flow. This cost would be approximately \$3,000-\$4,000. At this point we do not have any excess funds to complete the project for the Exhibit Hall. We have been hit with two years of inclement weather that brought our gate income way below budget, therefor not allowing us to have any funds in reserve for future upgrades.

Our board takes pride in organizing and running our county fair. Most of us are former 4-H and FFA members and do our best to support both those entities. The improvements to our Exhibit Hall would help to beautify and improve this well-used building.

I respectfully ask this committee to give House Bill 1591 a DO PASS to recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joan Wettlaufer".

Joan Wettlaufer

President

Bottineau County Agricultural Society

AKA "Bottineau County Fair"

HB 1591 County Fair Resiliency Grant

My name is Arleene Hansen, I am writing to show my support for the HB 1591, which will have a huge impact on our local county fair. As a youth I was not lucky enough to be involved in the county fair. But my children are, and it is something that is so beneficial to them. The large topics, projects, and skills that our kids are introduced to by being involved with the county fair is irreplaceable. The county fair brings together the community in several different faucets.

The buildings that are part of the fair are used to showcase all the hard work & exhibits the kids have worked on throughout the year. In the off season they are utilized for youth wrestling, archery, crop judging, hippology, 4-H meetings, vendor shows, wedding dances, community events, public walking, and many other community impactful meetings & events. The maintenance & upkeep on these buildings is essential as they are an important part of the community itself.

I urge you to pass HB 1591. By doing so you will have an invaluable opportunity, in making a long-lasting positive difference in the lives of many within our community!

Thank you

Sincerely,



Arleene Hansen

Trista Gemar
9953 83rd St SE
Fullerton, ND 58441
trista@drtel.net

RE: HB 1591 County Fair Resiliency Grant

Dear Members of the House Agriculture Committee:

As a former 4-H member, current leader and volunteer, and parent of very active 4-H members, I am writing to express my strong support for funding infrastructure at county fairs, which play a critical role in supporting 4-H programs and promoting agricultural education across our state and counties. Not only do county fairs support 4-H, but they also provide many entertainment options, such as rodeos, music events, and more, that bring families, neighbors and outside communities together. Investments in these facilities not only ensure their longevity but also strengthen the positive impact they have on our youth, families and communities.

4-H programs provide unparalleled opportunities for young people to develop leadership, responsibility, and life skills while engaging in hands-on projects that foster a deep appreciation for agriculture and community service. County fairs are the cornerstone of these efforts, serving as a platform for youth to showcase their hard work, gain confidence and build valuable connections with their peers, mentors, and the broader community.

Unfortunately, many county fairgrounds face an aging infrastructure that limits their ability to meet the growing needs of 4-H programs and simply maintain what we have. For example, in Dickey County, the commercial building that is used for static exhibits, community events such as weddings, and other community events, needs major improvements specifically in the restrooms. The restrooms have been out of order for several years now, forcing the fair board to move in portable restrooms during the fair due to lack of funding to repair the plumbing. The current electrical situation doesn't support the campers, with breakers consistently blowing. The showering facilities are in desperate need of improvement. In the past 3 years that I have camped at the fairgrounds with my children, I have taken very quick, freezing cold showers. In the livestock barn, the last few years have seen an increase in youth exhibiting animals. A barn full of animals, youth and families is a great site to see. However, with this growth comes challenges. Not only is space an issue in the barn, but space is also an issue in the wash rack, tie-outs, and showring. Improvements are also needed to ensure the health and safety of both animals and participants. Adequate airflow and ventilation are critical for maintaining appropriate temperatures, reducing stress on animals and promoting overall well-being. A shelter structure to be built over the showring and spectator stands has been in the discussion for the last few years, but again, lack of funding is the issue for each one of these repairs and improvements. Improvements like these would not only benefit the 4-H participants, but also the wide range of local organizations and events that could utilize these spaces year-round.

Investing in county infrastructure is also an investment in the county's economic vitality. County fairs bring significant economic activity to rural communities by attracting visitors, creating jobs,

and supporting local businesses. Moreover, they inspire the next generation of agricultural leaders and innovators, the continued success of our state and county's agricultural sector.

I respectfully urge you to prioritize funding for county fair infrastructure funding, voting in favor of HB 1591. Your support will empower our 4-H programs, enhance educational opportunities for our youth, and strengthen the communities you represent.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Trista Gemar". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Trista Gemar

The Ransom County Fair in Lisbon, North Dakota has been in existence since 1952. We recently replaced 2 very old barns on our Ransom County Fair Grounds in Lisbon, ND. We replaced them with a steel span 150 x 60 ft multi-use facility and a showring. Included are 3 horse stalls and 146 removeable steel pens for the goats, pigs, and sheep during our county fair. The 4-H clubs in our county have around 200 individuals that show at our fair in August each year. There are 2 bathrooms with showers and an office. Building is also heated. Cost was over \$900,000.00. We have received some donations; we have also applied for grants and have received some. The balance is funded by a loan for \$500,000.00. The building is currently being used for Archery for more than 80 participants.

Testimony for the County Fair Resiliency Grant bill
Christopher Schauer, President, Adams County Fair Association
Agriculture Committee Hearing – HB1591
January 30, 2025

Chairman Beltz and members of the House Agriculture Committee, I am writing in support of HB 1591, the County Fair Resiliency Grant Bill. My name is Christopher Schauer and I am the President of the Adams County Fair Association in Hettinger, ND.

County Fairs are part of the fabric of summer and fall in ND with 4H members and the general public submitting their static and livestock exhibits, participating in rodeos, and for many, enjoying the one piece of “culture” that comes to town as entertainment. All of these events form what everyone knows as the “County Fair”. Larger counties have larger fairs, smaller counties have smaller fairs, but all of us participate at our own level in a wholesome activity for all ages, especially 4H youth. In Adams County many of our 4H participants in livestock are owning their own animals for the first time. Their families don’t own livestock and 4H provides the opportunity for them to learn about animal husbandry, where their food comes from, and most importantly, life skills and responsibility. All of these fairs, large or small, have one commonality – facilities. We can’t have a rodeo without an arena; we can’t have a static show without a building, we can’t have a livestock show without pens and a show arena; and we can’t have a band without a stage. Many of these facilities across the state trace their origins to early 1900’s. Our town, Hettinger, was founded in 1907. Over the years we have conducted many capital fundraising efforts to maintain our fairgrounds with the limit funds we have. We maintain our operating budgets on a combination of fundraising and mills, but deferred maintenance and modern buildings don’t fall within those budgets. Building costs have skyrocketed in the past decade and our needs are not being met with our current funds. I encourage you to give HB1591 a DO PASS recommendation and give fairs of all sizes a chance to address needed maintenance and building projects so we can continue to provide these services to our communities.

Sincerely,



Christopher Schauer
President, Adams County Fair Association

Amanda Hegland
6216 31st St. NE
Oberon, ND 58357

Dear House Agriculture Committee,

My name is Amanda Hegland, and I am writing to express my strong support for HB1591, which provides critical funding to support county fairs through the County Fair Resiliency Grant Program. As a community member deeply involved in Eddy County 4-H, I believe this bill offers an invaluable opportunity to enhance our fairgrounds, particularly the static building, which serves as a vital space for 4-H members and the broader community.

County fairs play an essential role in North Dakota's 4-H program by offering youth a platform to showcase their hard work, learn important life skills, and foster community engagement. By participating in 4-H at the county fair, young people gain practical experience in leadership, public speaking, and problem-solving—all of which are key to their personal and professional development. Furthermore, county fairs help build strong local networks, bringing families, volunteers, and community members together to celebrate agriculture and youth achievements.

The proposed \$3 million in grants, with awards of up to \$100,000 per county fair association, would go a long way in improving the infrastructure of our county fairgrounds, ensuring that future generations of 4-H members have access to the resources they need to thrive. A remodel of our static building, for example, would not only enhance the educational experience for 4-H participants but also improve the fair's overall ability to host a variety of events, which in turn strengthens our community.

I urge you to support HB1591 and ensure that county fairs across North Dakota continue to provide valuable opportunities for youth development and community engagement. Thank you for your consideration, and for your continued dedication to supporting North Dakota's agricultural and youth programs.

Sincerely,

Amanda Hegland

Amanda Hegland

HB 1591 County Fair Resiliency Grant

January 28, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

I wish to put forth my testament of support to the HB 1591 County Fair Resiliency Grant as a 4-H parent, community member and veterinarian/small business owner in Ransom County. County fairs are where many kids develop a real world education in winning and losing, in sweat equity, the reward of growing their knowledge and responsibility, and where communities grow together. Without county fairs, there would be loss of tradition, loss of fun, loss of eating together during a free corn feed hosted by rodeo queens and princesses, loss of ability to achieve grass roots political reach, extension service education, small business advertisement, and of course the draw of the competition among community members in who has the best jam in the county! While I'm sure 4-H could find a way to survive without a county fair, it certainly is a cornerstone of it and the kids thrive on the community attention and the community thrives on the education provided by our kids promoting agriculture. I urge you to support this grant so county fairs continue to maintain the tradition and continuing memory for all generations.

Sincerely,

Dr. Charly Stansbery

Chairman Beltz and members of the House Agriculture Committee

My name is Brad Brummond, I am currently the Fair Manager for the Walsh County Fair. I have been the fair manager for around 20 years and served as the Walsh County Agent for 31 years. I give up just about every Saturday in the winter to coach 4-H land and agronomy teams, as I believe in 4-H and the positive effect it has on their development into responsible adults. I am a product of Sargent County 4-H. The fair is the highlight of the 4-H year. My responsibility as Fair Manager is to advise and assist our president and get the buildings ready for the fair. I think I can rightly claim to know more about our fair buildings than any living individual.

We just recently commissioned an engineering report on the status of our fair buildings. The report on our fair arena, where we show livestock, was less than we had hoped for. We have a building that needs extensive repairs to the point that it is most likely more cost effective to push it in and start over on the existing concrete slab. The estimated cost is between one and a half million dollars and two million dollars. I believe with the price of material these days we are looking at the two-million-dollar number.

We have a fair that has been scheduled for the third week in October over the old teachers convention for over 30 years and our schools respect that Thursday and Friday and schedule it off so their students can participate in our fair. You can well imagine the variety of weather I have experienced over my 31 years at the fair. We have had 60-degree weather, and we have had a full scale blizzard a week before the fair. We can't just set up tents and pens and do it outside unless we abandon our dates.

Our County is currently struggling to replace a jail that has to also be replaced so I don't think there is going to be a lot of money to help us with our building. It is a sad commentary on the state of our society that we must fund jails over fairs. The best way to fix the need for jails is to develop strong resilient adults and I can think of no better way than supporting a program like 4-H and fairs. I have been involved in Fairs and 4-H my whole life and if I could volunteer for another 50 years the debt would never be paid to those who gave me the opportunity fairs and 4-H gave me. My children all went through 4-H and the Walsh County Fair, and they are going to be the medical professionals our state so desperately needs.

I would like to urge you to support HB 1591.

Brad Brummond

Private Citizen and Walsh County Fair Manager

Dear Chairman Beltz and members of the House Agriculture Committee,

The Walsh County 4-H Council, comprised of dedicated 4-H leaders from across our county, would like to officially express our support for HB 1591. Walsh County 4-H has a proud tradition of excellence in North Dakota, marked by numerous accomplishments and the development of outstanding young adults who have represented our community with distinction.

Our county is home to one of the largest 4-H livestock shows in eastern North Dakota, an event that highlights the hard work, dedication, and talents of our youth. These shows take place in the arena, a space that has been central to creating countless cherished memories for families and participants at the fair. The arena and other fair buildings are vital not only for 4-H activities but also for fostering a sense of community and pride in our region.

We strongly support any efforts to assist in the renovation and improvement of this building. Over the years, both the fair and the county have made significant investments in maintaining the fairgrounds and its structures for over 75 years. However, the costs associated with necessary repairs and upgrades are now exceeding the capacity of local resources. As a result, we are advocating for assistance to ensure the continued use and enjoyment of these facilities for future generations of 4-H members, families, and the community at large.

Sincerely,

Walsh County 4-H Council

Dear Chairman Beltz and members of the House Agriculture Committee,

On behalf of the Walsh County Commissioners, I am writing to express our strong support for HB 1591, which seeks to provide grant funding to 4-H boards for much-needed building repairs and renovations. The Walsh County Commission has been a steadfast supporter of our county fair over the years, recognizing its vital role in youth development, community engagement, and local economic impact.

Currently, we are facing significant financial challenges in maintaining and improving our fair building. The estimated cost for necessary building repairs is between \$1.5 million and \$2 million. These repairs are critical to ensuring the safety, accessibility, and continued success of the fair and the programs it supports. However, our ability to fund these large-scale improvements is limited. At present, we are budgeting only .54 mills for the support of the Walsh County Fair, which is insufficient to cover the growing infrastructure needs.

The passage of HB 1591 would provide essential funding to address these challenges, ensuring that our 4-H & FFA programs and county fair remain strong, vibrant, and accessible for future generations. Investing in these facilities is not just about maintenance, it is about sustaining a tradition that fosters youth leadership, agricultural education, and community spirit.

We strongly urge you to vote in favor of HB 1591 and to advocate for its passage. By doing so, you will be supporting an invaluable program that has a lasting impact on the youth and residents of Walsh County. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Walsh County Commissioners



Dear Chairman Beltz and Members of the House Agriculture Committee,

On behalf of the Jamestown Area Chamber of Commerce and Jamestown Tourism, I am writing to express our strong support for HB 1591, the County Fair Resiliency Grant program. This bill provides essential funding to support county agriculture fair associations in North Dakota, ensuring the long-term viability of these critical community events.

Agricultural fairs play a vital role in our state's economy, culture, and tourism. They serve as a hub for showcasing North Dakota's agricultural heritage, supporting youth development through organizations like 4-H and FFA, and providing significant economic benefits to local businesses. Events like the Stutsman County Fair not only celebrate our agricultural roots but also bring in thousands of visitors, generating spending in our hotels, restaurants, and local businesses.

However, many county fairs face infrastructure challenges, with aging buildings, outdated facilities, and limited resources for expansion. HB 1591 addresses these concerns by appropriating \$3 million in one-time funding for infrastructure improvements, ensuring fairs across North Dakota remain sustainable and continue to serve their communities. With a maximum grant of \$100,000 per county fair association, this funding will have a direct impact by improving fairgrounds, enhancing visitor experiences, and supporting local economies.

Investing in county fair infrastructure is an investment in North Dakota's future. We respectfully urge this committee to give House Bill 1591 a "DO PASS" recommendation and support our state's agricultural fairs as they continue to grow, educate, and bring communities together.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Emily Bivens

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading 'Emily Bivens' in a cursive script.

Executive Director • Jamestown Area Chamber of Commerce • Jamestown Tourism



**Testimony in Support HB 1591
Presented to the House Agriculture Committee
Prepared by Bernie Dardis, Mayor, City of West Fargo
Thursday, January 30, 2025**

Chairman Beltz and members of the House Agriculture Committee:

Thank you for accepting my written testimony in support of House Bill 1591. The City of West Fargo has a long history of partnership with the Red River Valley Fair, whose grounds are located in our city's extraterritorial area. We support this grant program to provide funding for FFA and 4H infrastructure at county fair grounds and feel this will only serve to benefit the young people of West Fargo, Cass County, and across the state.

Cass County currently has 19 4H clubs and serves multiple FFA chapters in Districts 4 and 5. These programs are vital to educating young people about the importance of agriculture to our state and region, and provide roots to the next generation of leaders, not only for our ag industries, but across sectors and communities. I was a participant in both FFA and 4H!

Currently, these programs have a low cost of entry, less than \$10/student, which make them accessible to young people of all backgrounds. Providing grants for facilities can help to ensure the costs of participation remain affordable. Improving these facilities will also improve the overall quality of programming offered to students and visitors at the Red River Valley Fair. I encourage you to give HB 1591 a DO PASS recommendation and join county fairs across North Dakota in growing the next generation of farmers, industry professionals, and leaders.

Sincerely,

Bernie Dardis, Mayor
City of West Fargo
bernie.dardis@westfargond.gov

Good Morning,

Chairperson and members of the committee,

My name is Breana Kiser, and I am writing to express my strong support for HB1591. This critical legislation presents a vital opportunity to invest in county fairground infrastructure, directly benefiting 4-H programs, livestock exhibitors, and the broader community.

As a representative of Dickey County 4-H, I have witnessed firsthand the growing needs of our participants and the infrastructure challenges county fairs face. Over the years, 4-H enrollment has steadily increased, with more youth bringing livestock projects and engaging in fair activities. However, our fairgrounds struggle with outdated barns, limited space, and inadequate facilities to meet these growing demands.

Many of our barns, originally built decades ago, were not designed to accommodate the current volume and variety of livestock projects. Structural decay, including deteriorating framing posts, threatens the integrity of these barns, which are essential for housing animals safely. Additionally, inadequate ventilation, shade, and cooling systems leave livestock vulnerable to extreme summer temperatures.

The livestock show ring, where both the annual 4-H livestock show and open-class livestock competitions take place, is fully exposed to the blistering sun and heat of North Dakota summers. This creates significant risks not only for animal welfare but also for youth exhibitors who work tirelessly to prepare and present their projects. To ensure the safety of both youth and livestock, it is imperative to invest in stable, well-designed barns and the construction of a shade structure over the show ring.

Beyond the fair itself, investing in year-round facilities would maximize the fairgrounds' value for the entire community. Upgraded, multi-use buildings could host 4-H events, educational workshops, and large community gatherings throughout the year. These improvements would foster greater engagement, support lifelong learning opportunities, and strengthen the fairgrounds' role as a central hub for the county. Enhanced facilities could also serve as venues for winter livestock workshops, STEM programs, and even emergency shelters when needed.

The funding proposed in HB1591 offers counties a much-needed opportunity to address these pressing infrastructure issues. Modernized fairgrounds will not only enhance the experience of 4-H members and livestock exhibitors but will also provide long-term benefits to the broader community by creating safer, more versatile, and accessible spaces. This funding is not just an investment in physical structures—it is an investment in our youth, our agricultural heritage, and the future of our rural communities.

I strongly urge your support for HB1591 to ensure that county fairs can continue to provide meaningful opportunities for young people while strengthening the fabric of rural life. Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.




Sincerely,

Breana Kiser

Breana Kiser
NDSU Extension
Agriculture and Natural Agent, Dickey County



STUTSMAN COUNTY

 511 2nd Ave SE
 Jamestown, ND 58401
 (701) 252-9035
 www.stutsmancounty.gov

January 29, 2025

House Agriculture Committee
Mike Beltz, Chairman
and Members of the House Agriculture Committee
Testimony in Support of HB 1591

Dear Chairman Beltz, Vice-Chair Hauck, and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Stutsman County Commission, I'm writing to express strong support for HB 1591, which provides essential funding for county fairs across North Dakota.

County fairs are a vital part of our rural communities, showcasing agriculture, supporting youth programs like 4-H and FFA, and bringing families together to celebrate our state's rich farming heritage. These events provide educational opportunities, economic benefits, and a sense of community pride that cannot be overstated.

Many county fairs operate on tight budgets, relying on volunteers and limited local resources to continue their long-standing traditions. HB 1591 would ensure that county fairs have the financial support needed to maintain and improve their facilities, expand programming, and continue serving as a cornerstone of rural life in North Dakota.

I urge you to support HB 1591 and invest in the future of our county fairs.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Amanda Hastings
Stutsman County Commissioner
ahastings@stutsmancounty.gov

Letter submitted with support of Jerry Bergquist, Chairman and Levi Taylor, Vice-Chairman

County Commissioners

Jerry Bergquist – Jamestown
 Chad Wolsky – Jamestown
 Levi Taylor – Ypsilanti
 Michael Hansen – Montpelier
 Amanda Hastings – Jamestown

County Officials

Jessica Alonge – Auditor/COO
 Maureen Pederson – Treasurer/Recorder
 Tyler Perleberg – Tax Director
 Fritz Fremgen – States Attorney
 Chad Kaiser – Sheriff

Josh Smaage – Dir. Of Information Technology
 Shannon Davis – Human Resource Director
 Mandi Freije – Human Service Zone Director
 Chad Jackson – Jail Administrator
 Jessica Moser – 911/Emergency Manager

David Bratton – Veterans Service Officer
 Jesse Christianson – Int. Road Superintendent
 Karl Bergh – Park Superintendent
 Ashley Kjellberg – Extension Agent
 Brenda Jarski-Weber – Extension Agent

Angela Rost
502 10th Ave SE
Jamestown, ND 58401
Angela.rost@ndsu.edu
701-252-9030

January 29, 2025

Chairman Beltz and Members of the House Agriculture Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 1591. I am here to express my strong endorsement for the appropriation of funds through this bill, which will allow for the improvement of the Stutsman County fairgrounds and infrastructure.

The Stutsman County Fair has a long history as an important cultural and economic pillar for our community. For years, our fair has served as a venue where agricultural producers, 4-H members, local families, and visitors come together to celebrate our state's agricultural heritage. We have seen firsthand the positive impacts it has on our local economy, and the fair remains a key event for promoting North Dakota's agriculture in Stutsman County.

However, like many county fairs across the state, we are facing infrastructure needs. Our facilities require significant upgrades and repairs to continue providing the high-quality, safe, and accessible environment that our fairgoers and exhibitors deserve. With the passage of House Bill 1591, the Stutsman County Fair would be able to access the vital funding necessary to address these needs, such as improving exhibition halls, upgrading restroom facilities, and enhancing our overall event infrastructure to better accommodate the growing demands of our fair and community.

Agriculture plays an essential role in our fair, showcasing North Dakota's agricultural diversity. From livestock competitions to crop displays and 4-H achievements, the Stutsman County Fair directly connects our community to the vital work happening on farms and ranches across our region. The improvements made through this grant would not only ensure the fair continues to thrive but would also allow us to better support future generations of agricultural leaders and innovators.

Beyond the importance of agriculture, the fair has a significant economic and social impact on Stutsman County. The fair brings thousands of attendees to our community each year, supporting local businesses, filling hotel rooms, and generating revenue for restaurants, gas stations, and retail shops.

State investment in this infrastructure would leverage private funds already committed to improving our facilities. The funding authorized in House Bill 1591 would help ensure that the Stutsman County fairgrounds can continue to serve as a beacon for agricultural education and community pride for years to come.

The support for our fair extends beyond financial contributions—it is built on the hard work of countless volunteers who dedicate their time and energy to making the event a success. We have a strong and dedicated team of community members who believe in the value of the Stutsman County Fair and are committed to preserving its future.

Finally, I want to underscore the return on investment this funding will provide. Not only will these infrastructure improvements make our fair a safer, more accessible space, but they will also contribute to the continued growth and vitality of Stutsman County and North Dakota as a whole. The benefits of this investment will ripple through our community and beyond, strengthening our agricultural heritage and economy for generations to come.

I respectfully ask this committee to give House Bill 1591 a DO PASS recommendation, ensuring that the Stutsman County Fair, along with many others across the state, can continue to thrive and contribute to the prosperity of our region and state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Angela Rost

4-H Program Assistant

NDSU Extension – Stutsman County

701-252-9030



Testimony of Darwin Wilke
Bowman County Fair Association
In Favor of HB 1591
January 30, 2025

Dear Chairman Beltz and Committee Members,

I am writing to express our strong support for the bill currently under consideration to provide funding and resources for county fairs across our state. As a members of our community who deeply value the role our county fair plays in our culture and economy, we urge you to consider the long-term benefits that supporting county fairs can have for rural communities, agriculture, and local economies.

County fairs have long been a cornerstone of our state's agricultural heritage, serving as a platform for showcasing local talent, 4-H programs, and youth activities. These events are not only an opportunity to celebrate our agricultural traditions but also county fairs foster a sense of community, bringing people together to enjoy rodeos, demolition derbies, and each other's company. They promote educational opportunities, preserve traditions, and provide a venue for families to bond over fun, entertainment, and competition. The fairs also play a pivotal role in educating younger generations about agriculture and the importance of this industry in our community and our state.

Unfortunately, many county fairs face significant challenges when it comes to maintaining and upgrading their facilities. Aging infrastructure, inadequate facilities, and a lack of funding can limit the ability of county fairs to expand and improve the experience for attendees, exhibitors, and vendors. By supporting capital improvements, this bill would provide the necessary resources to modernize fairgrounds, improve safety, enhance accessibility, and ultimately strengthen the sustainability of these vital community events. Improved facilities will help preserve the legacy of county fairs, ensuring that future generations continue to enjoy and learn from these essential events.

I strongly urge you to support this bill, as it would provide critical funding for the capital improvements needed to strengthen our county fairs and ensure they remain an integral part of our state's cultural and economic fabric.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Darwin Wilke", is written over a faint, larger blue outline of the same signature.

Darwin Wilke, President
Bowman County Fair Association

I am writing in favor of HB1591.

As the President of the Dickey County Fair Board in Ellendale, I cannot emphasize enough how important a program like this can be to our local, rural fairs. Currently our fair is eligible to receive funding through our county via a mill levy. That, paired with exhaustive fundraising by a volunteer board, is how we provide the entertainment, community meal and awards for our youth achievement each year. But that does not give us room to make improvements or the ability to save to fund for large capital projects. As a result we are forced to take out higher-interest loans in order to make necessary structural changes to our fair. For instance, we are in the process of building a community-use building with accessible bathrooms. The estimated cost of the project is \$175,000. We received a grant for approx. \$35,000, leaving us to get a loan for the remainder.

For our rural communities, what ends up happening is that our local businesses get tasked with the heavy ask of supporting our fair through donations and in-kind offerings, when they are already being hit hard with requests from local students, organizations and non-profits. In today's economy, we know that those dollars don't go nearly as far as they used to, no matter how hard we try to sharpen our pencils.

Our current fair yearly budget is roughly \$120,000. Almost half of that comes through yearly gifts and sponsorships. This makes planning for the future almost impossible. We are currently in dire need of a new barn facility for our 4-H animals and livestock shows. The project is estimated to cost between \$500,000 and \$750,000. I'm not certain how we could ever afford this...yet, in order to provide our community with what is needed for livestock safety, as well as the safety of the community during our fair, we will need to find a way. This bill would be a great start to alleviate that burden on our local businesses, while giving our fairs an opportunity to make some much-needed capital repairs.

Thank you,

Val Wagner

Monango, ND

Dickey County Fair Board President

Testimony for the County Fair Resiliency Grant Bill- HB 1591

Dear House Agriculture Committee,

I am Lily McFadden, and a member of the Slope County Fair Board. I am writing on behalf of the Slope County Fair. Our fair is the longest, continuous county fair in North Dakota, dating back to August of 1920. I strongly support House Bill 1591, which proposes to allocate grant funding from the general fund to assist county fairs with infrastructure improvements. If this bill passes it will provide essential support to smaller communities, enabling them to sustain their county fairs and continue fostering opportunities for youth involvement through programs like 4-H.

Being in a small, rural community we all cherish our county fair. It is a time where we can come together as a community and enjoy each other's company, share laughs, and support our youth through 4-H. Our youth are a vital part of our community's future, and the county fair provides them with a platform to showcase their hard work, skills, and dedication. Through our fair we can help them foster a sense of pride, responsibility, and achievement while helping build lasting connections between generations. The fair is not only a celebration of agriculture and tradition but also a cornerstone of the community cohesion and support. By investing in the infrastructure of our county fairgrounds, we ensure that this valuable tradition can continue to thrive and positively impact future generations.

I strongly encourage you to support House Bill 1591 as it is vital for the continued success of county fairs across North Dakota, especially for smaller, rural communities like ours. By providing the necessary infrastructure support, this bill will preserve an important tradition, empower our youth, and strengthen the bonds within our community. Thank you for your consideration

Sincerely

Lily McFadden

Member, Slope County Fair Board.



Stutsman County Fair Association

PO Box 757

Jamestown, ND 58402-0757

OFFICERS

Dennis Mickelson, President
Marv Frey, Vice President
Jason Connolly, Treasurer
Deb Hatlewick, Secretary

DIRECTORS

Pat Stockert
Rod Wilhelm
Dennis Sand
Chad Kaiser
Shane Roemmich

January 29, 2025

House Agriculture Committee

Mike Beltz, Chairman

And Members of the House Agriculture Committee

Testimony in Support of HB 1591

Dear Chairman Beltz and Committee Members,

As a member of the Stutsman County Fair Board, I understand the vital role fairs play in celebrating our communities, supporting youth development, and driving economic growth across North Dakota. In Stutsman County, we are celebrating our 127th year this summer.

Our facilities are aging and we face challenges in maintaining and improving our infrastructure to meet the needs of our community. Some of the most important current needs of our fair are ADA accessible bathrooms, a storm shelter, agricultural educational facility, roof repairs, concert stage, grandstand and concession updates. A long-term goal would be a year-round arena to be used for livestock, horse, Ag Expo, and other events.

Agriculture plays an essential role in our fair, showcasing North Dakota's agricultural diversity. From livestock competitions to crop displays and 4-H achievements, the Stutsman County Fair directly connects our community to the vital work happening on farms and ranches across our region. The improvements made through this grant would not only ensure the fair continues to thrive but would also allow us to better support future generations of agricultural leaders and innovators.

Stutsman County Fair has a yearly attendance of approximately 20,000 fair goers. This event celebrates our agricultural history by bringing thousands of families together through 4-H, FFA, Rodeo, show casing their livestock, horses, rabbits, chickens, art, flowers and baked goods. The attendees and exhibitors support local businesses from gas stations, to restaurants, hotels, and retail shops.

Stutsman County Fair is a nonprofit and relies on volunteers to manage and oversee all aspects of the fair. They are critical to the continued insurance that fair attendees have a family fun experience every year. In order to maintain a safe and healthy environment, we are in need of support from House Bill 1591. We have very limited private sponsorships.

I respectfully ask this committee to give House Bill 1591 a DO PASS recommendation to ensure the continued support of the Stutsman County Fair and others across the state.

Sincerely,

Rod Wilhelm

Board Member Stutsman County Fair



Letter of Support – HB 1591

Thursday, January 30, 2025

Chairman Beltz and members of the House Agriculture Committee,

For the record, my name is Cale Dunwoody, and I have the distinct pleasure of serving as the Vice President of Public Policy for the Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce (FMWF Chamber). On behalf of our over 1,700 members, I respectfully offer testimony in support of House Bill 1591.

At the FMWF Chamber, our mission is to protect and promote business, inspire individuals, cultivate communities, and influence action. Our region is proud to boast the Red River Valley Fairgrounds (RRVFG) which serves as an important community hub providing entertainment, education, and connection. This facility provides the community with more than a fair – it hosts many impactful agriculture events and programs throughout the year, such as the Big Iron Farm Show, FFA and 4-H Exhibits, and the Agriculture Education Center.

The RRVFG is essential to providing agricultural education and promotional opportunities for the region and state – bringing in attendees from across the nation and world.

- **The Big Iron Farm Show:** In 2023, more than 60,000 attendees came from across the nation and several other countries to see demonstrations, visit 900+ exhibit booths, connect with their peers and attend training sessions.
- **FFA and 4-H Exhibits:** In 2024, the fair had over 12,100 FFA and 4-H static exhibits that were displayed for attendees to view. Additionally, in 2024 the RRVFG hosted 4-H programming for students to engage in livestock showing, a livestock quiz, and a variety of agricultural exhibits.
- **Agriculture Education Center:** Since the renovation and reopening of the AG Education Center, the RRVFG have hosted numerous fieldtrips for hundreds of area students. Providing kids and families with interactive and educational experiences to learn about our region's agriculture.

The combined events and programming at the RRVFG generate an estimated annual \$150 million in economic impact. This impact includes direct revenue from the fair, spending from out-of-town visitors (hotels, restaurants, retail, etc.), and the broader impact of increased regional economic activity driven by events held at the fairgrounds. These events and programs offer much more than economic impact, it provides substantial societal and educational impact as well. In the current labor market, quality-of-life assets and placemaking infrastructure serve as major attraction and retention tool for much needed workforce. The RRVFG serves as this critical community asset that energizes our community by bringing year-round placemaking opportunities – improving the quality of life of hundreds of thousands of residents throughout North Dakota.

The RRVFG is an essential part of the Red River Valley region, adding to the economic vitality, and offers entertainment and educational opportunities for our community. We understand the great importance of fairgrounds across North Dakota and their impact on communities. We urge the committee to give this bill a DO PASS to support critical infrastructure at fairs across the state.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and your commitment to North Dakota.



THE CHAMBER
FARGO MOORHEAD WEST FARGO

Sincerely,

Cale Dunwoody
Vice President of Public Policy
Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce

McLEAN COUNTY FAIR
PO BOX 103
UNDERWOOD, ND 58576

Chairman Beltz and Members of the House Agriculture Committee:

The McLean County Fair Board is asking for support of House Bill No. 1591 – County Fair Resiliency Grant Program.

The McLean County Fair was established 69 years ago in Underwood. We showcase the achievements of 4H, FFA, and Junior Points Livestock students with their static exhibits and livestock, earning them premiums and ribbons. Individuals and schools are also awarded premiums through their static exhibits. Our goal is to keep the McLean County Fair a family-friendly event with farm animals, great food, and fun entertainment. Entertainment events with animals is always a highlight and educational – petting zoo, pony rides, pig races, Ranch Rodeo, horse barrel racing, birds of prey, monkeys, even snakes!

The McLean County Fair struggles with being able to keep the Fair financially viable and growing. Our gate admission and exhibit numbers keep increasing which is an indication that the public desires County Fairs throughout North Dakota.

Some of our immediate needs are additional bleachers, an ancillary fire suppression system for our food booth, and updated restrooms. We are in the planning stages of replacing a barn, open-air pole barn, and two beef tie-outs, with one larger, “all seasons” barn that would include a show ring, office space and restrooms.

The McLean County Fair is run completely by volunteers from throughout the County.

The fairground is used numerous times throughout the year and contributes financially to the hotels, groceries, hardware, and lumber stores as well as gas stations and advertising.

The McLean County Fair Board respectfully asks that this committee give House Bill 1591 a DO PASS recommendation.

Sincerely,
Diane Schell, President
McLean County Fair

Chairman Bletz & House Committee Members,

Thank you for inviting us to come and speak to you on behalf of the Pierce County Fair in Rugby and county fairs throughout North Dakota. My name is Don Jelsing, vice president of the Pierce County Fair.

To just give you a quick summary of my life with our county fair. In 1990, I came up with the thought that Rugby should have some type of fair in the community, as there had not been one there for many years. Another gal and I started planning to have a county fair in 1991. Cleaning brush, removing dead trees and removing old dilapidated buildings, we had our first year in 1991. With nothing more than determination and volunteers, it grew from there. It wasn't very long and we had 240 volunteers within the first 9 years. I don't think that we have to say anymore about how the community feels about their county fair. I personally funded the county fair with my own money. I have been with the county fair ever since. After the first 9 years, I went to work raising money through sponsorships, donations, live auctions, grants and on-line auctions. We were getting by with using a piece of land that was owned by the Rugby Park Board. OK, so much about the past. Why do we have to re-locate the fair? A few

things. **HOLD UP PHOTO** .. This is the future land of the Pierce County Fair Grounds.

1. Carnival – not enough room – more rides, larger rides
2. The past ground is sloped too much – cant block rides safely enough - A SAFETY ISSUE
3. New ground has more room, period. Room for roads for EMT'S, LAW ENFORCEMENT, FIRE FIGHTERS, MEDICAL DOCTORS & NURSES, if needed. A SAFETY ISSUE
4. Room for pathways for pedestrians, wheel chairs and families walking together. A SAFETY ISSUE
5. New land provides an area for parking on the grounds. Old land had no parking. SAFETY & CONVIENIENCE.
6. Provides a pierce of land for an outdoor horse arena.
7. More exhibit area
8. More room for shaded areas for senior citizens, mothers, their children and others. SAFETY &

COMFORT. We have no infrastructure such as water, electricity, sewer, buildings, bleachers. We are here to talk about the future. About the future of our communities and the things that bring communities closer together, county fairs and their future, for the families who rely on organizations such as 4-H Clubs, to help teach young citizens the work ethics that 4-H can teach them.

Repairing holes in an exhibit building, re-doing water lines throughout the grounds, replacing bathrooms that are 50 plus years old. We could go on. We are not solely here to talk about patching a hole in a roof or replacing a bleacher. Yes, it's important! But we all need to look into the future. Why did county of Pierce spend a ton of money repairing the court house a few years ago? Because there was a need for that structure into the future, for the people in the community. We talk about fixing the infrastructure of the fairgrounds. Why? Because its important. Its investing in the future of our youth. You are investing in the future of our communities. Not a single person here should be thinking that fixing that barn isn't really important, unless you are just storing a Bobcat, some rodeo panels etc. But you know, good usable fair buildings store memories, they hold educational dreams of families spending time together, that will stay with not only our youth but adults also. I want to tell you a little story that should hit your heart..... **1999 STORY of 2 kids.**

There is not a single person in this room that can not see and feel, how life's experiences at the county fair can or did change their life forever. Are we looking for more money to pay the people on fair boards?? OOPS! that's right, most of us DON'T GET PAID!! We do it for the community. Without maintaining the infrastructure of those memories, there won't be those county fairs... along with those memories. Sometimes there are facilities that can be repaired, many times they just have to be replaced. We ask that you seriously consider being a major part in the future of our youth and our communities in North Dakota.

Before I leave you, I want you to seriously look at something. **PUZZLE**, A 300-piece puzzle. Take a real good look at this, A REAL GOOD look at this. What do you see? What do you **really** see? **TURN PUZZLE.** I see the names of 300 people who were all volunteers at last year's Pierce Couoty Fair. 300 people who were proud to be part of a community event, a county fair, that looks toward the future. Our county fair is very much an agricultural fair and heavily supported by the community and it's businesses within. The hotels have many reservations from reunions and visiting family gatherings.

We seriously ask you today to consider being a major part in the future of our youth and our communities. I respectfully ask this committee to give House Bill 1591 a DO PASS to recommendation.

Representative Beltz- Chairman, Representative Hauck- Vice Chairman and members of the Agriculture Committee,

The Walsh County Fair Association would like to express our support for the County Fair Resiliency Grant Bill HB 1591. As a County Fair Association, a few of our objectives include having an annual gathering for our communities to come together and promoting and showcasing agriculture within our counties. Our county residents, surrounding county residents, local businesses and of course our 4-H and FFA youth look forward to the fair year after year.

We along with many other fairs in North Dakota are facing the reality of aging facilities in need of repairs, rebuilds or updating. We have had an engineer take a look at our main fair building that is used for livestock shows, youth activities as well as our static projects. It is in need of at the very least extensive structural repairs and we have been advised that it may be more cost effective to put up a new building. These structural issues will need to be addressed within the next couple years and we are looking at around \$2,000,000.00 worth of work. We are not likely to get any help with funding from our county as they have other projects in the works right now. Having these grant funds available for county fairs would help to keep the tradition of the county fair alive. The Walsh County Fair celebrated 100 years in 2014 so it has been a long standing tradition in Walsh County!

We would like to thank the committee for this opportunity to share with you our support of the County Fair Resiliency Grant Bill HB 1591.

Thank you again,

Walsh County Fair Association

Chairman Mike Beltz and members of the Committee
House Agriculture Committee
House Bill HB 1591
Thursday, January 30, 2025
2:00 pm Room 327C North Dakota State Capital Building

IN SUPPORT OF BILL

Chairman Beltz and Agriculture Committee members.

The Greater Grand Forks Fair is submitting this testimony in support of HB 1591, the County Fair Resiliency Grant program. Many county fairs in North Dakota have aging facilities that are in need of major repairs or replacement. Some have smaller needs, but lack the funding to complete projects that are important. Others need to move their fairgrounds or reinvent their facilities. Almost all of these fairs are small budget organizations that are run by volunteers with very limited or no paid staff. Financial support available through a program such as this would greatly benefit the organizations, the facilities they manage, and the communities they serve.

Counties have very tight budgets and have limited resources available to use on fairgrounds property. They normally have higher priority uses for their available funds such as jails, courthouses, office facilities, etc. Here in Grand Forks County we are dealing with these issues. The county has told us that they will not be able to help us with funding any large projects on the fairgrounds.

We have many capital projects on our fairgrounds that we need to complete. We need repairs for our grandstands. They were built 90 years ago by the Works Progress Administration and dedicated by President Franklin Roosevelt. We have spent more than \$200,000 in the past several years on structural repairs. We have the facility inspected each year and complete some repair work each year based on need. Our engineer estimates we need another \$800,000 in repair work in the next 5-10 years. Most of these repairs are structural or for infrastructure. They do not take into consideration the need for a renovation and upgrade of the entire facility to make the structure more appealing and comfortable for people attending events. That could add another \$500,000 to \$1 million to the cost. Our annual budget to run the fairgrounds, make repairs, and put on the annual fair averages approximately \$300,000.

We need to repair major parts of our electrical infrastructure on our grounds. We spent \$130,000 on electrical work in 2024 on the north half of the grounds. We will need at least that or more to finish the work that is needed for the remainder of the property. We need to replace lines that are old and failing, update lighting, install new poles, etc. We have 1 bathroom building that is more than 50 years old and needs significant work. That will cost at least \$150-200,000. We have 2 steel buildings that are more than 40 years old and a pole barn that is approximately 25 years old. We have worked hard to maintain those structures, but each is in need of repairs in the near future. We have several other projects on our list of things we need to do or things that would improve our grounds.

Our fairgrounds has an economic impact on the Grand Forks community. This is true in almost every community that has a fairgrounds. We provide a variety of entertainment options during the summer months that bring people to town and give local people entertainment options. We normally have more than 100,000 people use the fairgrounds during the May through September period of time. Highlights include some of the best dirt track auto racing in the country held every Friday night, our annual county fair in June, weekly go kart racing programs through the summer, horse shows, and barrel race events. The 4-H program uses the fairgrounds often during the summer months. We have hosted class reunions, employee appreciation events, theater productions, and a variety of other events for the community. Finding additional funding that would help us improve our facilities and make them more desirable to the community would be very helpful.

We strongly support a DO PASS recommendation for HB 1591. We believe that this would help many county fairs across the state of North Dakota repair and improve the facilities they operate and help the communities they serve. We believe this is would be a win for all involved.

Mark Landa
Board Secretary
Greater Grand Forks Fair and Exhibition



Red River Valley Fair

West Fargo, ND

1805 Main Ave W, West Fargo, ND 58078

Cody@redrivervalleyfair.com

(701) 282-2200

January 29, 2025

Chairman Beltz and Members of the House Agriculture Committee

North Dakota Legislative Assembly

919 S 7th Street

Bismarck, ND

Subject: Support for House Bill 1591 – Investing in North Dakota's County Fairs

Dear Chairman Beltz and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to you today on behalf of the **Red River Valley Fair** to express our **strong support for House Bill 1591**. As the **CEO of the Red River Valley Fair**, I have witnessed firsthand the **incredible impact that county fairs have on North Dakota communities**, from fostering agricultural education to driving economic growth.

The Impact of the Red River Valley Fair

The Red River Valley Fair is far more than an annual event—it is a **cornerstone of our community, a hub of agricultural learning, and a major economic driver** for the region. Each year, our fairgrounds serve **over 150,000 visitors**, providing them with entertainment, education, and hands-on experiences that celebrate North Dakota's agricultural heritage.

Beyond the fair itself, our **year-round programming and events contribute significantly to the state's economy and workforce development**, including:

- **4-H and FFA Participation:** In 2024, we hosted **over 12,100** 4-H and FFA exhibits, giving youth valuable opportunities to engage in livestock showing, educational competitions, and agricultural career exploration.
- **Agriculture Education Center:** Since its renovation, the center has welcomed **multiple field trips for hundreds of students**, providing an interactive learning experience that connects kids and families to North Dakota's agricultural roots.
- **Leadership & Education Program (LEP):** Participation in this program has grown steadily over the past three years, empowering young leaders and fostering a deeper understanding of the agricultural industry.

1805 Main Avenue West | West Fargo, ND 58078 | 701-282-2200

www.redrivervalleyfair.com



*Red River Valley Fair
Association*

- **Economic Impact:** The Red River Valley Fairgrounds generates an estimated \$150 million in **annual economic impact**, including revenue from events, spending by out-of-town visitors, and increased business activity across the region.

The Need for Infrastructure Investment

Despite the **overwhelming benefits** that fairs provide, many fairgrounds across North Dakota—including ours—are facing **critical infrastructure challenges**. Aging facilities, increasing operational costs, and the growing demand for educational programming make **state investment in fairgrounds more important than ever**.

House Bill 1591 is an essential first step toward addressing these challenges. While we acknowledge that the current funding level does not fully meet the needs of fairs across the state, **passing this bill will establish a foundation for future investment**, ensuring that fairgrounds remain safe, accessible, and impactful for generations to come.

A Call to Action

On behalf of the **Red River Valley Fair and county fairs across North Dakota**, I urge you to **give House Bill 1591 a DO PASS recommendation**. This legislation is not just an investment in fairgrounds—it is an investment in **agriculture, youth development, economic sustainability, and the overall quality of life for North Dakotans**.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to the future of North Dakota's county fairs. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or need further information.

Sincerely,

Cody Cashman

CEO, Red River Valley Fair

**Board of County
Commissioners**

Tony Grindberg
Duane Breitling
Tim Flakoll
Jim Kapitan
Joel Vettel



PO Box 2806
211 Ninth Street South
Fargo, North Dakota 58108
701-241-5609
www.casscountynd.gov

January 29, 2025

Chairman Mike Beltz
Members of House Agriculture Committee
North Dakota State Capitol
600 East Boulevard
Bismarck, ND 58505-0360

RE: HB 1591

Chairman Beltz and Members of the House Agriculture Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 1591, one-time funding for the County Fair Resiliency Grant Program. The Cass County Commission has worked closely with Cody Cashman, CEO of the Red River Valley Fair Association to understand the infrastructure and maintenance needs of the Red River Valley Fairgrounds.

Thanks to the hard work of Mr. Cashman, the Commission has a better understanding that many county fairgrounds across North Dakota have similar infrastructure and deferred maintenance needs as the Red River Valley Fairgrounds. Mr. Cashman has forged partnerships to help county fair associations speak with unified message is describing the fairgrounds needs across North Dakota

Because agricultural-based county fairs are such a fundamental part of the state's history and culture, it is appropriate, if not vital, that this funding source be available to county agricultural fair associations to begin addressing the serious infrastructure and maintenance needs of many of North Dakota's county fairs.

We urge your support of HB 1591 and this critically important investment in North Dakota's county fairs.

Sincerely,

Chairman Tony Grindberg
Cass County Commission

COMMISSIONER
DOUG GOEHRING



ndda@nd.gov
www.ndda.nd.gov

**NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

STATE CAPITOL
600 E. BOULEVARD AVE. - DEPT. 602
BISMARCK, ND 58505-0020

**Testimony of John Schneider
Business, Marketing and Industry Division Director
House Agriculture
Room 327C
January 30, 2025**

Chairman Beltz and members of the House Agriculture Committee, I am John Schneider, Business, Marketing and Industry Division Director here on behalf of Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring. I am here today in support of HB 1591 relating to a county fair resiliency grant program.

The bill provides an appropriation of \$3,000,000 to the agriculture commissioner to be used for projects to improve infrastructure at county fairgrounds. The awards will be a fifty percent cost-share and limited to \$100,000 to each county fair association. The commissioner would provide these reimbursable awards based on need.

Chairman Beltz and committee members, thank you for your time. I urge a do pass on HB 1591. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Agriculture Committee Room JW327C, State Capitol

HB 1591
1/31/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the agriculture commissioner for a county fair resiliency grant program.

4:11 p.m. Chairman Beltz opened the meeting.

Members Present: Chairman Beltz, Vice Chairman Hauck, Representatives, Anderson, Dobervich, Henderson, Holle, Hoverson, Kiefert, Nehring, Olson, Rios, Schreiber-Beck, Tveit, Vollmer

Discussion Topics:

- Committee Action

4:11 p.m. Representative Vollmer moved Do Pass and rereferred to appropriations.

4:11 p.m. Representative Rios seconded the motion.

Representatives	Vote
Representative Mike Beltz	Y
Representative Dori Hauck	Y
Representative Karen A. Anderson	AB
Representative Gretchen Dobervich	Y
Representative Donna Henderson	N
Representative Dawson Holle	Y
Representative Jeff Hoverson	Y
Representative Dwight Kiefert	Y
Representative Dennis Nehring	Y
Representative SuAnn Olson	Y
Representative Nico Rios	Y
Representative Cynthia Schreiber-Beck	Y
Representative Bill Tveit	Y
Representative Daniel R. Vollmer	Y

Motion passed 12-1-1

4:17 p.m. Representative Dobervich will carry the bill.

4:17 p.m. Chairman Beltz closed the meeting.

Diane Lillis, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
HB 1591 ([25.1256.02000](#))

Agriculture Committee (Rep. Beltz, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** and **BE REREFERRED** to the **Appropriations Committee** (12 YEAS, 1 NAY, 1 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HB 1591 was rereferred to the **Appropriations Committee**.

2025 HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS

HB 1591

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Appropriations Committee Roughrider Room, State Capitol

HB 1591
2/18/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the agriculture commissioner for a county fair resiliency grant program.

3:14 p.m. Chairman Vigesaa opened the hearing.

Members present: Chairman Vigesaa, Vice Chairman Kempenich, Representatives Anderson, Bosch, Fisher, Hanson, Louser, Martinson, Mitskog, Monson, Murphy, Nathe, Nelson, O'Brien, Pyle, Richter, Sanford, Stemen, Swiontek, Wagner
Members absent: Representatives Berg, Brandenburg, Meier

Discussion Topics:

- County Fair size
- Infrastructure improvements
- Agriculture presence per county

3:14 p.m. Representative Beltz introduced the bill.

3:24 p.m. Representative Nelson moved to amend by requiring a dollar-for-dollar match.

3:24 p.m. Representative Monson seconded the motion.

3:29 p.m. Roll call vote:

Representatives	Vote
Representative Don Vigesaa	Y
Representative Keith Kempenich	Y
Representative Bert Anderson	Y
Representative Mike Berg	AB
Representative Glen Bosch	Y
Representative Mike Brandenburg	AB
Representative Jay Fisher	Y
Representative Karla Rose Hanson	Y
Representative Scott Louser	Y
Representative Bob Martinson	Y
Representative Lisa Meier	AB
Representative Alisa Mitskog	Y
Representative David Monson	Y
Representative Eric J. Murphy	Y
Representative Mike Nathe	Y
Representative Jon O. Nelson	Y
Representative Emily O'Brien	Y
Representative Brandy L. Pyle	Y

Representative David Richter	N
Representative Mark Sanford	Y
Representative Gregory Stemen	Y
Representative Steve Swiontek	Y
Representative Scott Wagner	Y

3:31 p.m. Motion passed 19-1-3

3:31 p.m. Representative Nelson moved a Do Pass as Amended.

3:31 p.m. Representative Stemen seconded the motion.

3:31 p.m. Roll call vote:

Representatives	Vote
Representative Don Vigesaa	N
Representative Keith Kempenich	Y
Representative Bert Anderson	Y
Representative Mike Berg	AB
Representative Glen Bosch	N
Representative Mike Brandenburg	AB
Representative Jay Fisher	N
Representative Karla Rose Hanson	Y
Representative Scott Louser	N
Representative Bob Martinson	N
Representative Lisa Meier	AB
Representative Alisa Mitskog	Y
Representative David Monson	Y
Representative Eric J. Murphy	Y
Representative Mike Nathe	N
Representative Jon O. Nelson	Y
Representative Emily O'Brien	Y
Representative Brandy L. Pyle	Y
Representative David Richter	Y
Representative Mark Sanford	Y
Representative Gregory Stemen	Y
Representative Steve Swiontek	Y
Representative Scott Wagner	Y

3:31 p.m. Motion passed 14-6-3

Representative Dobervich is the bill carrier.

3:32 p.m. Chairman Vigesaa closed the hearing.

Mary Brucker, Committee Clerk for Sierra Schartz, Committee Clerk

February 18, 2025

Sixty-ninth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO

MB
2/19/25
1 of 1

HOUSE BILL NO. 1591

Introduced by

Representatives Ostlie, Grueneich, Jonas, Novak, Pyle, Satrom, Schreiber-Beck, Stemen
Senators Conley, Meyer, Wanzek

1 A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the agriculture commissioner for a county fair
2 resiliency grant program.

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

4 **SECTION 1. APPROPRIATION - AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER - COUNTY FAIR**

5 **RESILIENCY GRANT PROGRAM - ONE-TIME FUNDING.** There is appropriated out of any

6 moneys in the general fund in the state treasury, not otherwise appropriated, the sum of

7 \$3,000,000, or so much of the sum as may be necessary, to the agriculture commissioner for

8 the purpose of providing grants to county agriculture fair associations for the planning, design,

9 and construction of infrastructure projects, for the biennium beginning July 1, 2025, and ending

10 June 30, 2027. The agriculture commissioner may not award more than \$100,000 to a county

11 agriculture fair association under this program. A grant recipient must provide one dollar of

12 matching funds from nonstate sources for each dollar provided by the agriculture commissioner.

13 The funding in this section is considered a one-time funding item.

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
HB 1591**

Appropriations Committee (Rep. Vigesaa, Chairman) recommends **AMENDMENTS** ([25.1256.02001](#)) and when so amended, recommends **DO PASS** (14 YEAS, 6 NAYS, 3 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). HB 1591 was placed on the Sixth order on the calendar.

2025 SENATE AGRICULTURE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

HB 1591

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee

Fort Union Room, State Capitol

HB 1591
3/13/2025

A bill for an act to provide an appropriation to the agriculture commissioner for a county fair resiliency grant program.

9:00 a.m. Chairman Luick called the meeting to order.

Members present: Chairman Luick, Vice-Chair Myrdal, Senator Marcellais, Senator Weston, Senator Weber, Senator Lemm

Discussion Topics:

- Importance and education value of fairs, 4-H, and FFA
- Infrastructure updates
- History of county fairs
- Reimbursable basis as needed
- Rural community enhancement
- Attendance of fairs
- Livestock showing and number of head
- Variety of fairs and fairgrounds across the state
- Youth and agriculture
- Fair board members and loans
- One-to-one grant match and small communities
- Community investments and the future

9:00 a.m. Representative Mitch Ostlie, District 12, testified in favor, introduced the bill, and submitted testimony #39966.

9:03 a.m. John Schneider, Marketing and Industry Division Director, ND Department of Agriculture, testified in favor and submitted testimony #41323.

9:03 a.m. Pete Hanebutt, Legislative Director, ND Farm Bureau, testified in favor.

9:05 a.m. Matt Perdue, ND Farmers Union, testified in favor.

9:07 a.m. Brad Brummond, Fair Manager, Walsh County Fair, testified in favor and submitted testimony #41324.

9:12 a.m. Mark Hafner, Mercer County Fair Board, testified in favor.

9:18 a.m. Diane Schell, President, McClean County Fair, testified in favor and submitted testimony #41185.

9:24 a.m. Nathan Schneider, President, Burke County Fair Association, testified in favor and submitted testimony #41023.

9:28 a.m. Donald S. Jelsing, Vice President, Pierce County Fair Association, testified in favor and submitted testimony #41091.

9:41 a.m. Lisa Heiser, Stark County Fair Association, testified in favor.

9:46 a.m. Chairman Luick closed the hearing.

9:46 a.m. Senator Weber moved a Do Pass.

9:46 a.m. Senator Lemm seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Larry Luick	Y
Senator Janne Myrdal	A
Senator Randy D. Lemm	Y
Senator Richard Marcellais	Y
Senator Mark F. Weber	Y
Senator Kent Weston	Y

Motion passed 5-0-1.

Senator Weber will carry the bill.

Additional written testimony:

Renae L. Smith, Treasurer, Golden Valley County Fair Association, submitted testimony #39600 in favor.

Amanda Hastings, Stutsman County Commissioner, submitted testimony #39900 in favor.

Paulette A. Laudert, Treasurer, Ransom County Fair Association, submitted testimony #40516 in favor.

Beth Knutson, Auditor, McClean County, submitted testimony #41022 in favor.

Khloe K. Sobolik, Secretary, Pierce County Fair Association, submitted testimony #41160 in favor.

Mark S. Landa, Board Secretary, Greater Grand Forks Air, submitted testimony #41163 and #41164 in favor.

Jesse Jahner, Sheriff, Cass County Sheriff's Office, submitted testimony #41194 in favor.

Peggy Brandt, Fair Board Director, Morton County Fair Association, submitted testimony #41219 in favor.

Cale Dunwoody, FMWF Chamber of Commerce, submitted testimony #41223 in favor.

Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee
HB 1591
3/13/25
Page 3

9:47 a.m. Chairman Luick closed the hearing.

Audrey Oswald, Committee Clerk

Reconsidered at 10:45 a.m. on 3/13

I am writing on behalf of the Golden Valley County Fair Association in Beach, ND. We have a great small county fairground that is nearly 100 years in existence with barns and restroom facilities needing major improvements.

We have been working on these improvements for the past few years with what we can afford and what the community can help to donate. Even \$100,000 can help us update bathrooms in one of our buildings that have leaks and possible mold behind the walls.

Not only are we a local county fairground we are also the location for emergency management disasters for the town of Beach and surrounding communities. We need a facility with bathrooms that operate and that are safe for the public.

Can we match funds, for example \$100,000 **NO** we cannot. We did updates last year that were costly and depleted our checking acct balance to almost zero until our mill levy funds come in at the first of each year. We take out a line of credit from our local bank to cover our expenses and pay that back when we receive mill money from the county. We never have funds near that amount available to match.

Our fairgrounds are used not only for the yearly county fair but also for events from weddings, funerals, graduations to other numerous community functions throughout the year.

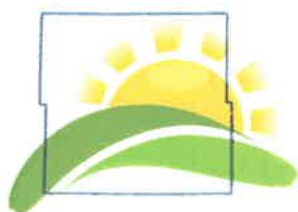
Sincerely,

Rena Smith




Treasurer

Golden Valley County Fair Association

Renaesmith26@gmail.com



STUTSMAN COUNTY

 511 2nd Ave SE
 Jamestown, ND 58401
 (701) 252-9035
 www.stutsmancounty.gov

March 7, 2025

Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs
Senator Larry Luick, Chairman
and Member of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee
Testimony in Support of HB 1591, with revision

Dear Chairman Luick, Vice-Chair Myrdal, and Committee Members,

I am writing to express my support for HB1591, which aims to provide grant funding for county fairs and agricultural events in North Dakota. The passage of this bill in the House was a crucial step toward strengthening our local fairs, which serve as vital community and economic drivers. However, I would like to express my concerns regarding the passed revision requiring a dollar-for-dollar matching fund requirement.

While I understand the importance of ensuring that grant recipients have a vested interest in these projects, a strict one-to-one match could inadvertently limit the ability of smaller county fairs to fully benefit from the program. Many smaller fairs operate on tight budgets with limited fundraising capabilities, making it difficult to meet such a high matching threshold. As a result, this well-intended grant program may become inaccessible to the very communities that need it the most.

I respectfully urge consideration of a tiered or reduced matching requirement, allowing for flexibility based on the size and financial capacity of each fair. This would ensure that all county fairs, regardless of their financial standing, can access funding to improve facilities, enhance programming, and continue serving their communities.

Thank you for your time and dedication to supporting our local fairs and agricultural heritage. I appreciate your consideration of this request and your commitment to strengthening rural communities across North Dakota.

Thank you kindly for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Amanda Hastings
 Stutsman County Commissioner
ahastings@stutsmancounty.gov

County Commissioners

Jerry Bergquist – Jamestown
 Chad Wolsky – Jamestown
 Levi Taylor – Ypsilanti
 Michael Hansen – Montpelier
 Amanda Hastings – Jamestown

County Officials

Jessica Alonge – Auditor/COO
 Maureen Pederson – Treasurer/Recorder
 Tyler Perleberg – Tax Director
 Fritz Fremgen – States Attorney
 Chad Kaiser – Sheriff

Josh Smaage – Dir. Of Information Technology
 Shannon Davis – Human Resource Director
 Mandi Freije – Human Service Zone Director
 Chad Jackson – Jail Administrator
 Jessica Moser – 911/Emergency Manager

David Bratton – Veterans Service Officer
 Jesse Christianson – Highway Superintendent
 Vacant – Park Superintendent
 Ashley Kjellberg – Extension Agent
 Brenda Jarski-Weber – Extension Agent

HB 1591 County Fair Resiliency Grant

Good morning, Chairman Luick, Vice-Chair Myrdal and members of the Senate Ag and Veterans Affairs committee. For the record, my name is Mitch Ostlie. Representative from District 12.

I am here today to introduce **HB 1591**. The County Fair Resiliency Grant Program represents a significant investment in the very heart of our traditions, bringing both opportunity and renewal to the places that serve as a gathering point for our families, neighbors, and visitors alike.

Our county fairs are more than just an event—it's a tradition that has been passed down for generations, bringing together people from all walks of life to celebrate agriculture, craftsmanship, entertainment, and community spirit. For many of us, the fair is a symbol of our rural heritage and a showcase for the hard work of our farmers, artisans, and youth.

But to ensure that the fairs continue to thrive and meet the needs of an evolving communities, we must invest in its infrastructure. Whether it's upgrading aging facilities, improving safety features, enhancing accessibility, or expanding amenities for visitors, these improvements are essential in keeping the fairgrounds vibrant, functional, and welcoming for years to come.

The County Fair Resiliency Grant Program is designed to provide financial support for these much-needed upgrades. Through this program, we will provide funding for projects that enhance the fairgrounds and improve the experience for fairgoers.

This grant program is an opportunity for us to partner with local organizations, nonprofits, and municipalities to bring our vision for a stronger, more resilient fairground to life. It's about preserving the rich history of our county fairs while ensuring that future generations can enjoy the same sense of pride and joy.

This grant would be administered by the ag commissioner. This office would develop the criteria for the application process, and it does require a 1 to 1 match.

This concludes my report. I encourage a do pass of HB 1591.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I will stand for any questions.

,

Ransom County Fair located in Lisbon, is in favor of House Bill No. 1591 Resiliency Grant Program. Lisbon is the county seat for Ransom County and every year we provide a county fair for our community. In addition, it is also where our 4-H Clubs, FFA Organizations and open class exhibitors get together to have their projects judged. We have eight 4-H Clubs in our county with a total of 198 attendees, along with two FFA Organizations, Enderlin and Lisbon, with a total of 228 attendees. This is the biggest event in our county and is very well attended by not only our county, but also with visitors from the surrounding counties of Richland, Sargent, Cass, LaMoure and Dickey. This has a huge economic impact on our community. The fair brings families and friends together to enjoy the judging, the carnival, stock car races, entertainment and fair food in a family friendly environment.

North Dakota county fairs started many generations ago and are a part of our heritage. We all need help keeping them going year after year along with making sure our buildings and grounds are safe for everyone. Many fairgrounds have some of the original buildings and need updating or replacing. Additional funding is needed to help with this. We see House Bill 1591 as a way to help county fairs keep their heads above water and as a way to update their fairgrounds. We would appreciate having "no county fair match to the grant" as smaller fairs would not be able to make that happen. We would appreciate a DO PASS vote for our county fairs. Thank you in advance for your DO PASS vote.



A Proud Past – A Promising Future

McLean County

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA

712 5th Avenue
Washburn, ND 58577
701.462.8541

www.mcleancountynd.gov

Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee
North Dakota Senate
69th Legislative Assembly

RE: HB 1591

Dear Chairman Luick and Committee Members,

The McLean County Commission, at its regular meeting on February 11, 2025, made a motion to support HB 1591. A Bill for an Act to provide an appropriation to the agriculture commissioner for a county fair resiliency grant program.

McLean County Commissioners realize the importance of county fairs and feel that a county fair resiliency grant program is a great way to help the county fair boards. This program will give them the ability to update their facilities and improve their programs within their counties for years to come.

The Commission also appreciates the efforts of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee as well as those Senators and Representatives that took the time to introduce HB 1591.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter and please consider a **Do Pass** to secure the future North Dakota County Fairs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beth A. Knutson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Beth A Knutson
McLean County Auditor

Office of McLean County Auditor Beth A. Knutson
Chief Deputy Auditor Lori A. Foss Deputy Auditor Kayla L. Oberlander
Deputy Auditor Diane L. Blumhagen Administrative Assistant Lynda Snyder



Burke County Fair Association
PO Box 202
Bowbells, ND 58721

March 4, 2025

Chairman Luick and committee members, I am writing to you respectively about the North Dakota House Bill 1591. While a county fair infrastructure bill is something that all small county fairs dream of, the sad reality is that some of us that need it most will not be able to obtain it as written.

Burke County is a very small county in North Dakota consisting of only around 2,200 residents. Our beloved county is federally designated as a historically underutilized business area. We struggle to bring new businesses and residents/families to our county. Burke County has limited recreational activities and events for our residents and their families to participate in. The Burke County Fair, which originated in 1916 is one of the few that we have to offer.

Like most other fairs, we have seen a decline in numbers over the 20 past years in our 4H programs for our kids and overall attendance. Since our new board was put in place in the last couple of years, we have seen that being reversed. Our attendance numbers are increasing dramatically and we are finally bringing new blood to Burke County. We are offering entertainment and new activities that our county has never seen.

Our emphasis has been promoting our great county and what we have to offer. Whether it is our wonderful small communities and schools, our fantastic emergency responders and departments, our agriculture and energy expansions, and our local businesses, we want to show North Dakota what Burke County has to offer.

Like many other fairs and organizations our biggest issue is funding. In 2024, we received less than a 1/3 of what we needed to put on our small county fair even without a carnival. Due to our generous sponsors and donors, we raised enough money to make this happen. The only issue is, there is not enough meat left on the bone for grounds and infrastructure improvements. Every building on our grounds is in dire need of improvement. Whether its leaking roofs, structurally failing buildings, or an aged unsafe electrical system, WE NEED HELP.

While I do strongly support the original HB1591, the amendment that was added does not help us. Essentially upon adding the amendment which includes the 1 to 1 match, the grant funding has become unattainable for us. I consider our fair to be on the same list with the many others that need this infrastructure grant the most, but sadly, I do think it is out of our community's reach.

Respectfully,

Nathan Schneider
President
Burke County Fair Association

Dear Senate Agricultural Committee, thank you for inviting us to come and speak to you on behalf of the Pierce County Fair in Rugby and county fairs throughout North Dakota. My name is Don Jelsing, vice president of the Pierce County Fair. To just give you a quick summary of my life with our county fair. In 1990, I came up with the thought that Rugby should have some type of fair in the community, as there had not been one there for many years. Another gal and I started planning to have a county fair in 1991. Cleaning brush, removing dead trees and removing old dilapidated buildings, we had our first year in 1991. With nothing more than determination and volunteers, it grew from there. It wasn't very long and we had 240 volunteers within the first 9 years. I don't think that we have to say any more about how the community feels about their county fair. I personally funded the county fair with my own money. I have been with the county fair ever since. After the first 9 years, I went to work raising money through sponsorships, donations, live auctions, grants and on-line auctions. We were getting by with using a piece of land that was owned by the Rugby Park Board. OK, so much about the past. Why do we have to re-locate the fair? A few things. (HOLD UP PHOTO) .. This is the future land of the Pierce County Fair Grounds. 1. Carnival – not enough room – more rides, larger rides 2. The past ground is sloped too much – can't block rides safely enough - A SAFETY ISSUE 3. New ground has more room, period. Room for roads for EMT'S, LAW ENFORCEMENT, FIRE FIGHTERS, MEDICAL DOCTORS & NURSES, if needed. A SAFETY ISSUE 4. Room for pathways for pedestrians, wheel chairs and families walking together. A SAFETY ISSUE 5. New land provides an area for parking on the grounds. Old land had no parking. SAFETY & CONVENIENCE. 6. Provides a piece of land for an outdoor horse arena. 7. More exhibit area 8. More room for shaded areas for senior citizens, mothers, their children and others. SAFETY & COMFORT. We have no infrastructure such as water, electricity, sewer, buildings, etc. We are here to talk about the future. About the future of our communities and the things that bring communities closer together, county fairs and their future, for the families who rely on organizations such as 4-H Clubs, to help teach young citizens the work ethics that 4-H can teach them. Repairing holes in an exhibit building, re-doing water lines throughout the grounds, replacing bathrooms that are 50 plus years old. We could go on. We are not solely here to talk about patching a hole in a roof or replacing a bleacher. Yes, it's important! But we all need to look into the future. Why did county of Pierce spend a ton of money repairing the court house a few years ago? Because there was a need for that structure into the future, for the people in the community. We talk about fixing the infrastructure of the fairgrounds. Why? Because its important. Its investing in the future of our youth. You are investing in the future of our communities. Not a single person here should be thinking that fixing that barn isn't really important, unless you are just storing a Bobcat, some rodeo panels etc. But you know, good usable fair buildings store memories, they hold educational dreams of families spending time

together, that will stay with them, not only our youth but adults also. So let me tell you a little story. A story that should hit your heart..... Back in 1999 I lived a story about 2 kids..... I believe that there is not a single person in this room that cannot see and feel, how life's experiences at the county fair can or did change your life or someone else's life forever. Are we looking for more money to pay the people on fair boards?? OOPS! that's right, most of us DON'T GET PAID!! We do it for the community. Without maintaining the infrastructure of those memories, there won't be those county fairs... along with those memories. Sometimes there are facilities that can be repaired, many times they just have to be replaced. We ask that you seriously consider being a major part in the future of our youth and our communities in North Dakota. Before I leave you, I want you to seriously look at something. Some of us receive some funding from a mill levy through the county. Some of us don't. But when it comes to having to make major infrastructure repairs, it does not go very far. We, the Pierce County Fair receive no mill levy because a few years ago the legislature passed a law which prohibits county commissioners to enact a mill levy for their fair unless they are grand fathered in. (A 300-piece puzzle). Take a real good look at this, A REAL GOOD look at this. What do you see? What do you really see? (TURN PUZZLE). I see the names of 300 people who were all volunteers at last year's Pierce County Fair. 300 people who were proud to be part of a community event, a county fair, that looks toward the future. Looks forward to watching their children grow up with good working values in the 4-H and FFA projects. Our county fair is very much an agricultural fair and heavily supported by the community and its businesses. The hotels have many reservations from reunions and visiting family gatherings. I leave you with a final thought. (PASS OUT PAPER) The Minot Daily News owns our local newspaper. I think they believe an awful lot about saving our county fairs, otherwise they would not have put this issue front and center of their paper. We seriously ask you today to consider being a major part in the future of our youth and our communities. I respectfully ask this committee to give House Bill 1591 a DO PASS recommendation. Thank you.

Chairman Luick and Committee Members,

My name is Khloe Sobolik, and I serve as the Secretary of the Pierce County Fair in Rugby. I urge you to support **HB 1591**, which provides funding for county fairs across North Dakota.

Personal Experience

I understand that some of you may question the necessity of funding for county fairs. At one point, I would have been skeptical myself. I didn't grow up on a farm, wasn't a 4-H member, and Rugby didn't even have a county fair when I was a child. My family would attend the State Fair, but not for the rides, food, or concerts. Instead, we spent our time visiting the exhibits and the animal barns—something I didn't fully appreciate at the time.

That all changed when I became involved with our local fair. Over the past 20 years, I have witnessed firsthand how deeply a county fair impacts a community. I now firmly believe that investing in our fairgrounds is investing in the heart of our towns.

Community & Economic Impact

A county fair is more than just an event; it's a **gathering place that strengthens community bonds** and creates lasting memories. As a teacher, I hear the excitement from our youth as they eagerly prepare projects to display, talk about their animals, or anticipate seeing their artwork hung for all to see. For many, the county fair is the highlight of their year.

Beyond its cultural value, county fairs provide **tangible economic benefits**:

- They support **local businesses** by bringing in vendors, artisans, and food providers.
- They encourage **agricultural education** by giving youth hands-on experiences with livestock and farming.
- They drive **tourism and revenue**, benefiting hotels, restaurants, and gas stations in rural areas.

However, these opportunities come at a cost. Fairgrounds require **safe buildings, well-maintained walkways, and updated facilities** to continue serving their communities. Without proper funding, we risk losing these vital spaces.

Call to Action

I respectfully ask you to **vote YES on HB 1591** and invest in the future of North Dakota's county fairs. By doing so, you are ensuring that families—just like mine—can continue making memories, learning valuable skills, and strengthening their communities. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Chairman Larry Luick and members of the Senate Agriculture and
Veteran Affairs Committee

House Bill HB 1591

Thursday, March 12, 2025

9:00 am Fort Union Room North Dakota State Capital Building

IN SUPPORT OF BILL

Chairman Luick and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of House Bill HB 11591, the County Fair Resiliency Grant bill. I strongly support the appropriation of these funds to help county fairs across the State of North Dakota maintain and upgrade facilities, and improve important community assets.

My name is Mark Landa. I serve on the board of directors for the Greater Grand Forks Fair in Grand Forks, ND. I have served on the board for 20 years and have served as Secretary of the board during that entire time. Prior to my election to the board I was a volunteer with the 4-H program working at the Fair for 11 years. So I have been involved with the Fair and the fair industry for more than 30 years.

The Grand Forks Fairgrounds has been the fairgrounds for Grand Forks County for more than 120 years. During that time it has hosted a wide range of events including the North Dakota State Fair on many occasions, Grand Forks County Fairs, a wide range of race events, concerts, livestock events, etc. The community has used it for meetings, class reunions, employee appreciation events, entertainment, and a variety of other uses. It has structures that were built by the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression, dedicated by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and are listed on the National Historic Register.

I could spend a great deal of time talking about why the Fairgrounds are important to Grand Forks and the surrounding area. However, I want to concentrate this testimony on the economic impact that the Fairgrounds have on the Grand Forks region. As you know, Grand Forks has several different facilities that support and host events in the community. Events that may be hosted at the Fairgrounds in many communities are hosted at the Alerus Center, Ralph Engelstad Arena or other facilities in Grand Forks. But most people don't realize that the Fairgrounds is also an important facility from an economic aspect.

The Alerus Center reported approximately 279,000 attendees in 2024. This number was up from closer to 200,000 in 2022 and 2023. Ralph Engelstad Arena set a record for attendance in 2024, also attracting approximately 280,000. Both are very significant numbers. The Grand Forks Fairgrounds attracts between 80-100,000 people every year operating for approximately 4 months in the summer. The first event is usually held some time in May depending on the weather and the last in the middle of September. So it appears that the Fairgrounds is the 3rd most utilized facility in Grand Forks and is only open for a portion of the year.

I have attached 2 forms to this testimony, both provided by Julie Rygg, Executive Director of Visit Greater Grand Forks. The first is a letter that Ms. Rygg provided when we applied for a

Destination Development Grant in 2023. It highlights the economic impact of several events held at the Fairgrounds in 2022. Most are race events held at River Cities Speedway, a very popular racetrack. It lists an average impact of more than \$243,000 for a regular Friday night race weekend. It also shows impacts of \$650-700,000 for every special event weekend at the track. It is missing a 2nd World of Outlaws Sprint Cars race normally held in August, which was rained out in 2022. If that was added to the list of events in the letter you would see an economic impact in the Grand Forks community of more than \$6,000,000. That does not include many of the smaller events held every summer such as go-kart races held every Wednesday evening all summer that attract 3-500 people every week, or multiple horse show and barrel races held in the horse arena all summer.

The second page is an Event Impact Summary of the Greater Grand Forks Fair in 2024. It shows a direct impact of \$466,166 in sales through the Fair, and a total of \$716,172 in sales for the community. The weather cooperated with us for the most part in 2024, so it was a good year. Those numbers should continue to grow as we make improvements in facilities at the Fairgrounds.

Fairgrounds all across North Dakota are gathering places for their communities. There are more than 30 fairgrounds in the state. Each has unique facilities and capabilities. Some are seasonal such as our facilities. Some have buildings that can be used all year round. But each one brings people to their communities for events. That means that they bring dollars to the communities, and sales tax dollars to the state. Improving the facilities should help these fairgrounds attract more people to their events, which should bring even more dollars to our communities and more tax dollars. Therefore, I believe that the economic impact of these facilities is an important reason to support HB 1591.

I ask that you vote for a Do Pass Recommendation on HB 1591.



August 30, 2023

Holly R. Miller
ND Department of Commerce
Tourism Division
1600 East Century Ave, Suite 6
Bismarck, ND 58503

Dear Holly:

On behalf of Visit Greater Grand Forks, I would like to offer support for the Greater Grand Forks Fair Board and the efforts to secure a Destination Development Grant. The improvements planned will have a significant impact on the facilities and the events which draw tens of thousands of visitors to our community each year. These changes will also provide the opportunity to expand current offerings, which will attract even more attendees from within and outside North Dakota.

The fairgrounds host events regularly that provide substantial economic impact for our city, county and state. For your reference here are just a few:

- Premier Racing // Fridays May through September - \$243,712 per week
- World of Outlaws Sprint Cars // June 2022 - \$662,167
- Greater Grand Forks County Fair // June 2022 - \$409,419
- World of Outlaws Late Models & IRA vs NOSA King of Wings // July 2022 - \$656,088
- John Seitz Memorial // September 2022 - \$705,032

Visit Greater Grand Forks subscribes to the Destinations International Economic Impact Calculator to generate the figures above.

As a destination marketing organization, we strive to not only entice visitors to Greater Grand Forks, but also ensure their enjoyment while they are here, and modernized facilities are crucial to achieving those goals. It is also important to note a visitor, whether in town for leisure, tournament, convention or business, has the potential to become a future resident.

Thank you so much for your consideration and this wonderful opportunity for our community! Please contact me with any questions you may have by phone (800.866.4566) or e-mail (julie@visitgrandforks.com).

Sincerely,

Julie Rygg
Executive Director

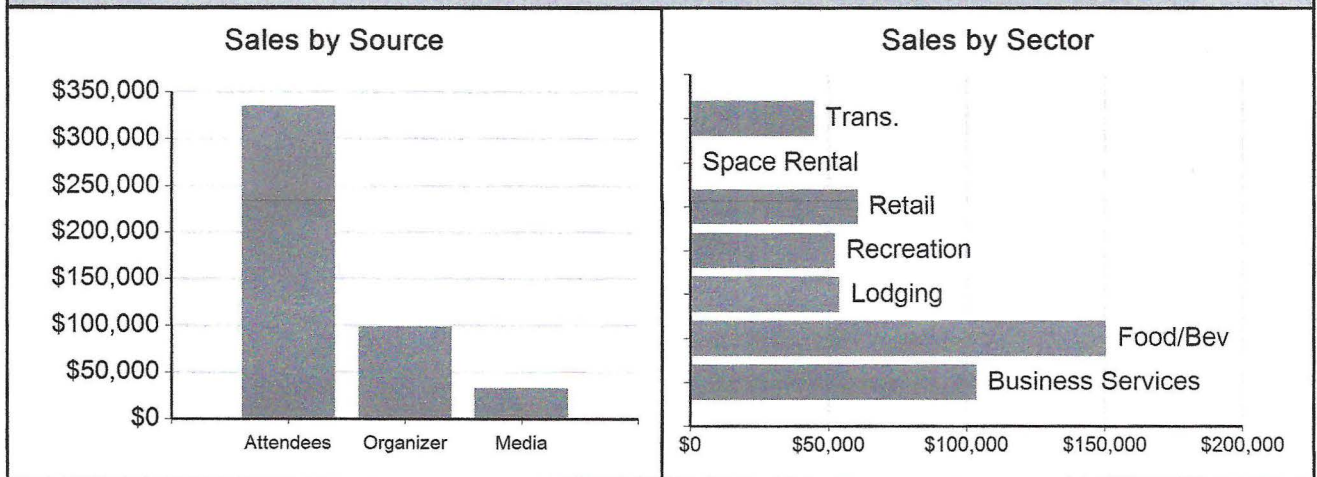
4251 Gateway Drive, Grand Forks, ND 58203
701.746.0444 | 800.866.4566
VisitGrandForks.com

Event Impact Summary

Destination: Greater Grand Forks Convention & Visitors Bureau

Event Parameters		Key Results	
Event Name:	2024 Greater Grand Forks Fair	Business Sales (Direct):	\$466,166
Organization:	Greater Grand Forks Fair	Business Sales (Total):	\$716,172
Event Type:	Other cultural (commemorations, religious, heritage, special interests, parades)	Jobs Supported (Direct):	156
Start Date:	6/19/2024	Jobs Supported (Total):	175
End Date:	6/23/2024	Local Taxes (Total):	\$12,007
Overnight Attendees:	156	Net Direct Tax ROI:	\$9,938
Day Attendees:	7666	Estimated Room Demand:	241

Direct Business Sales



Industry	Attendees	Organizer	Media/Sponsors	Total
Lodging	\$28,359	\$25,594	\$0	\$53,953
Transportation	\$44,140	\$522	\$143	\$44,805
Food & Beverage	\$149,476	\$500	\$402	\$150,378
Retail	\$60,745	\$0	\$0	\$60,745
Recreation	\$52,404	\$0	\$0	\$52,404
Space Rental	\$0	\$0	\$161	\$161
Business Services	\$0	\$72,023	\$31,697	\$103,720
TOTAL	\$335,124	\$98,639	\$32,403	\$466,166



Burke County Fair Association
PO Box 202
Bowbells, ND 58721

March 4, 2025

North Dakota Senators and Representatives, I am writing to you respectively about the ND House Bill 1591. While a county fair infrastructure bill is something that all small county fairs dream of, the sad reality is that some of us that need it most will not be able to obtain it as written.

Burke County is a very small county in North Dakota consisting of only around 2,200 residents. Our beloved county is federally designated as a historically underutilized business area. We struggle to bring new businesses and residents/families to our county. Burke County has limited recreational activities and events for our residents and their families to participate in. The Burke County Fair, which originated in 1916 is one of the few that we have to offer.

Like most other fairs, we have seen a decline in numbers over the 20 past years in our 4H programs for our kids and overall attendance. Since our new board was put in place in the last couple of years, we have seen that being reversed. Our attendance numbers are increasing dramatically and we are finally bringing new blood to Burke County. We are offering entertainment and new activities that our county has never seen.

Our emphasis has been promoting our great county and what we have to offer. Whether it is our wonderful small communities and schools, our fantastic emergency responders and departments, our agriculture and energy expansions, and our local businesses, we want to show North Dakota what Burke County has to offer.

Like many other fairs and organizations our biggest issue is funding. In 2024, we received less than a 1/3 of what we needed to put on our small county fair even without a carnival. Due to our generous sponsors and donors, we raised enough money to make this happen. The only issue is, there is not enough meat left on the bone for grounds and infrastructure improvements. Every building on our grounds is in dire need of improvement. Whether its leaking roofs, structurally failing buildings, or an aged unsafe electrical system, WE NEED HELP.

While I do strongly support the original HB1591, the amendment that was added does not help us. Essentially upon adding the amendment which includes the 1 to 1 match, the grant funding has become unattainable for us. I consider our fair to be on the same list with the many others that need this infrastructure grant the most, but sadly, I do think it is out of our community's reach.

Respectfully,

Nathan Schneider
President
Burke County Fair Association

Chairman Luick and Members of the Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about County Fairs in North Dakota and how they've shaped the State.

My name is Diane Schell. I have been President of the McLean County Fair Board for 20 years. Our Fairgrounds is centrally located in McLean County in Underwood.

All Fairs and fairgrounds, in North Dakota, are unique and offer their own set of attractions. For instance, some feature a racetrack, a horse arena or livestock show ring, and may have numerous exhibit buildings and barns. While others use rented buildings, tents, and borrowed equipment. Some Fairs run for 3 or 4 days; some run for 7 or 10 days. Most fairgrounds are used throughout the spring, summer, and fall, while a few fairgrounds have heated structures that can be used during later fall and winter.

One theme that is the same in all our Fairs is showcasing youth in agriculture. Through the years, students in 4H and FFA have been at the center of our Fairs. These students have been trained in; livestock management, welding, woodworking, mechanics, gardening and crop management, record keeping, financial responsibilities, and public speaking. All those skills are put on display at Fairs through friendly competition, awards, and monetary premiums. Many of these students later become involved in; farming, ranching, owning businesses, becoming members of numerous Boards, and even becoming State legislators.

Fairs provide an event where County residents and visitors can; visit, meet new friends, and enjoy unique entertainment in a safe environment.

In McLean County, the Fair brings all of our 11 communities together. We purchase supplies from our hardware stores, lumber yards, and grocery stores. The hotels, gas stations, restaurants, campgrounds, and bars are busy during the Fair. We support the local newspapers by purchasing advertisements, posters, and a separate publication of a Fair news tab.

It takes numerous organizations and volunteers from the County to support the Fair and in doing so they can raise money for their groups.

All Fairs showcase numerous animals. At the McLean County Fair, we have livestock shows, horse shows, rabbit and poultry shows, Barrel Racing, Ranch Rodeo, and a Petting Zoo. We've had pig racing, monkey racing, birds of prey, bucking bulls, and even a rattle snake exhibit.

Entertainment is a big draw for fairgoers. At our Fair; we have a carnival, car racing, local musical groups, magicians, circus acts, kiddie tractor pulls, and have showcased Native American dancers from White Shield and New Town several years.

Funding for the McLean County Fair Board comes from 1 mill from the County's budget. The rest of the funding needed must come from sponsorships, fees, and grants. Most of these funds are used during the Fair and other events on the fairgrounds. If the weather is good and the attendance is good, any profit is put back into buildings and grounds repair. To build anything new, the Fair Board members often must take out a loan that is personally guaranteed by these volunteers, who want to see the Fair continue and grow. Being a Fair Board member is a "Labor of Love".

Some of our immediate needs at the McLean County fairgrounds are updated restrooms, an ancillary system for the food booth, bleachers for the racetrack and horse arena, and a fence on the east side of the fairgrounds which is adjacent to US Hwy 83. We are trying to save money to replace our barn, pole barn, and beef tie-outs with 1 multi-use building that could be used year-round. We recently held a County wide meeting, where 30 people attended to discuss what a new building could be used for.

The Fair Resiliency Grant could help with these immediate needs and could possibly start the research needed for a new building. Our Board strongly supports HB 1591 and urges you to pass this legislation that will support County Fairs and the State of North Dakota.

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 1591 as it relates to the County Fair
Resiliency Program.**

Chairman Beltz and members of the House Agriculture Committee,

For the record my name is Jesse Jahner and I am the elected Sheriff in Cass County North Dakota. Thank you for accepting my written testimony in support of House Bill 1591.

The Cass County Sheriff's Office has had an excellent relationship with the Red River Valley Fair, Fair Staff and CEO Cody Cashman for many years. The Red River Valley Fair hosts several events year-round that benefit citizens and young adults in our community. They are very active with FFA, 4H and North Dakota State University Extension Office activities along with concert and summer fair events. The Cass County Sheriff's Office partners with the Red River Valley Fair to provide public safety at many of these events. In addition, the Red River Valley Fair allows area law enforcement to use parts of their grounds to conduct safety training. What I can tell you is that Red River Valley Staff are very good at developing community partnerships and work hand and glove with our agency to promote public safety.

I feel that providing these types of grants to entities like County Fairs is a great way to invest in community partnerships and community opportunities. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Jesse Jahner
Cass County Sheriff



Dear Chairman Luick & members of the committee:

My name is Peggy Brandt, and I am writing on behalf of the Morton County Fair Association to express our strong support for House Bill 1591, the County Fair Resiliency Grant Program.

County fairs have long been a cornerstone of our state's agricultural heritage. These events are a vital platform for showcasing local talent, promoting 4-H and FFA programs, and supporting youth activities. They serve as a celebration of our agricultural traditions and provide a unique opportunity for families, friends, neighbors and our communities to come together—whether it's to enjoy a rodeo, a demolition derby, participate in or watch a livestock show, or acknowledging the youth and local talent and strong work ethics by admiring the static exhibits. County fairs promote educational opportunities, preserve time-honored traditions, and foster community pride.

The role of county fairs in educating younger generations about agriculture and its importance to our communities and state cannot be overstated. For countless young people, 4-H and FFA are more than just extracurricular activities—they are the foundation of their future careers and a connection to the agricultural industry that sustains our way of life.

However, as many of you know, county fairs are increasingly facing significant challenges when it comes to maintaining and upgrading their facilities. Aging infrastructure, inadequate amenities, and a shortage of funding limit our ability to expand and enhance the experiences we offer to attendees, exhibitors, and vendors. These facilities are in desperate need of modernization to meet the needs of the communities they serve. While the intention of HB 1591 is to provide much-needed support, it's important to note that many smaller fairs may struggle with the requirement for a dollar-for-dollar match. These fairs often lack the financial reserves or sponsorship opportunities to meet this match, which could leave them at a disadvantage.

Additionally, the \$100,000 cap in funding may not be sufficient for fairs with severe structural or safety issues. Some fairs have no facilities at all, and the cost to build basic infrastructure or address critical safety concerns may far exceed this cap. In these cases, the amount allocated under this bill might not be enough to make the improvement needed, which could delay or even prevent them from receiving the help they need.

While we fully support the intent of HB 1591, I respectfully ask that the committee consider adjusting the dollar-for-dollar match requirement to make it more feasible for smaller fairs to participate. Furthermore, an increase in the funding cap or a tiered approach to funding would better address the needs of fairs with greater infrastructure challenges, ensuring that all fairs—large and small—can benefit from this vital program.

I strongly urge you to support HB 1591 with these considerations in mind. By supporting capital improvements through this bill, we can make the necessary investments to modernize fairgrounds, improve safety, enhance accessibility, and ultimately strengthen the sustainability of these essential community events. With this support, our fairgrounds will not only remain relevant for future generations but also ensure that county fairs can continue to thrive in the years to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Peggy Brandt
Morton County Fair Association



Letter of Support – HB 1591

Thursday, March 13, 2025

Chairman Luick and members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee,

For the record, my name is Cale Dunwoody, and I have the distinct pleasure of serving as the Vice President of Public Policy for the Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce (FMWF Chamber). On behalf of our over 1,700 members, I respectfully offer testimony in support of House Bill 1591.

At the FMWF Chamber, our mission is to protect and promote business, inspire individuals, cultivate communities, and influence action. Our region is proud to boast the Red River Valley Fairgrounds (RRVFG) which serves as an important community hub providing entertainment, education, and connection. This facility hosts many impactful agriculture events and programs throughout the year, such as the Big Iron Farm Show, FFA and 4-H Exhibits, and the Agriculture Education Center.

- **The Big Iron Farm Show:** In 2023, more than 60,000 attendees came from across the nation and several other countries to see demonstrations, visit 900+ exhibit booths, connect with their peers and attend training sessions.
- **FFA and 4-H Exhibits:** In 2024, the fair had over 12,100 FFA and 4-H static exhibits that were displayed for attendees to view. Additionally, in 2024 the RRVFG hosted 4-H programming for students to engage in livestock showing, a livestock quiz, and a variety of agricultural exhibits.
- **Agriculture Education Center:** Since the renovation and reopening of the AG Education Center, the RRVFG has hosted numerous fieldtrips for hundreds of area students. Providing kids and families with interactive and educational experiences to learn about our region's agriculture.

The combined events and programming at the RRVFG generate an estimated annual \$150 million in economic impact. This includes direct revenue from the fair, spending from out-of-town visitors (hotels, restaurants, retail, etc.), and regional economic activity from travel. This facility also serves as an attraction tool for the workforce. In the current labor market, quality-of-life assets and placemaking infrastructure are key to attracting and retaining workforce. The RRVFG serves as a critical community asset that energizes our community by bringing year-round placemaking opportunities – improving the quality of life of residents throughout North Dakota.

The RRVFG is an essential part of our region – generating economic activity, entertainment, and educational opportunities for our community. We recognize the impact and importance of fairgrounds across North Dakota and urge the committee to pass this bill a DO PASS to support critical infrastructure at fairs across the state.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and your commitment to North Dakota.

Sincerely,

Cale Dunwoody
Vice President of Public Policy
Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce

COMMISSIONER
DOUG GOEHRING



ndda@nd.gov
www.ndda.nd.gov

NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
STATE CAPITOL
600 E. BOULEVARD AVE. - DEPT. 602
BISMARCK, ND 58505-0020

Testimony of John Schneider
Business, Marketing and Industry Division Director
Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs
Fort Union
March 13, 2025

Chairman Luick and members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee, I am John Schneider, Business, Marketing and Industry Division Director here on behalf of Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring. I am here today in support of HB 1591 relating to a county fair resiliency grant program.

The bill provides an appropriation of \$3,000,000 to the agriculture commissioner to be used for projects to improve infrastructure at county fairgrounds. The awards will be a fifty percent cost-share and limited to \$100,000 to each county fair association. The commissioner would provide these reimbursable awards based on need.

Chairman Luick and committee members, thank you for your time. I urge a do pass on HB 1591. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Chairman Luick and members of the Senate Agriculture Committee

My name is Brad Brummond, I am currently the Fair Manager for the Walsh County Fair. I have been the fair manager for around 20 years and served as the Walsh County Agent for 31 years. I give up just about every Saturday in the winter to coach 4-H land and agronomy teams, as I believe in 4-H and the positive effect it has on their development into responsible adults. I am a product of Sargent County 4-H. The fair is the highlight of the 4-H year. My responsibility as Fair Manager is to advise and assist our president and get the buildings ready for the fair. I think I can rightly claim to know more about our fair buildings than any living individual. I have also been in the leadership of the ND-SD fairs for the past 6 years so I am familiar with the challenges the fairs in North Dakota face. I currently represent Northeastern North Dakota on this board and I am currently president, although I only speak for myself and the Walsh County Fair.

We just recently commissioned an engineering report on the status of our fair buildings. The report on our fair arena, where we show livestock, was less than we had hoped for. We have a building that needs extensive repairs to the point that it is most likely more cost effective to push it in and start over on the existing concrete slab. The estimated cost is between one and a half million dollars and two million dollars. I believe with the price of material these days we are looking at the two-million-dollar number.

We have a fair that has been scheduled for the third week in October over the old teachers convention for over 30 years and our schools respect that Thursday and Friday and schedule it off so their

students can participate in our fair. You can well imagine the variety of weather I have experienced over my 31 years at the fair. We have had 60-degree weather, and we have had a full scale blizzard a week before the fair. We can't just set up tents and pens and do it outside unless we abandon our dates.

Our County is currently struggling to replace a jail that has to also be replaced so I don't think there is going to be a lot of money to help us with our building. It is a sad commentary on the state of our society that we must fund jails over fairs. The best way to fix the need for jails is to develop strong resilient adults and I can think of no better way than supporting a program like 4-H and fairs. I have been involved in Fairs and 4-H my whole life and if I could volunteer for another 50 years the debt would never be paid to those who gave me the opportunity fairs and 4-H gave me. My children all went through 4-H and the Walsh County Fair, and they are going to be the medical professionals our state so desperately needs.

I would like to urge you to support HB 1591.

Brad Brummond

Private Citizen and Walsh County Fair Manager

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee

Fort Union Room, State Capitol

HB 1591

3/13/2025

A bill for an act to provide an appropriation to the agriculture commissioner for a county fair resiliency grant program.

10:45 a.m. Chairman Luick opened the hearing.

Members present: Chairman Luick, Vice-Chair Myrdal, Senator Marcellais, Senator Weber, Senator Weston, Senator Lemm

Discussion Topics:

- Committee action

10:45 a.m. Senator Weber moved a Do Pass and Rereferred to Appropriations.

10:45 a.m. Senator Lemm seconded the motion.

10:46 a.m. Senator Weber moved to reconsider Do Pass from previous hearing
(3/13/25 9:45am).

10:46 a.m. Senator Lemm withdrew his second.

Senators	Vote
Senator Larry Luick	Y
Senator Janne Myrdal	Y
Senator Randy D. Lemm	Y
Senator Richard Marcellais	Y
Senator Mark F. Weber	Y
Senator Kent Weston	Y

Motion passed 6-0-0.

10:47 a.m. Senator Weber moved a Do Pass and Rerefer to Appropriations.

10:47 a.m. Senator Lemm seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Larry Luick	Y
Senator Janne Myrdal	Y
Senator Randy D. Lemm	Y
Senator Richard Marcellais	Y
Senator Mark F. Weber	Y

Senator Kent Weston	Y
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Motion passed 6-0-0.

Senator Weber will carry the bill.

10:48 a.m. Chairman Luick closed the hearing.

Audrey Oswald, Committee Clerk

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
ENGROSSED HB 1591 ([25.1256.03000](#))**

Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee (Sen. Luick, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** and **BE REREFERRED** to the **Appropriations Committee** (6 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). HB 1591 was rereferred to the **Appropriations Committee**. This bill does not affect workforce development.

2025 SENATE APPROPRIATIONS

HB 1591

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Appropriations - Government Operations Division Red River Room, State Capitol

HB 1591
3/24/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the agriculture commissioner for a county fair resiliency grant program.

8:33 a.m. Chairman Wanzek opened the meeting.

Members present: Chairman Wanzek, Vice-Chair Dwyer, Senator Burckhard, Senator Erbele, and Senator Sickler.

Discussion Topics:

- Seasonal county fair facilities
- Economic impact of county fairs and special events held at fair facilities
- Multiple-use facilities
- Amendment added by the House
- Aging infrastructure
- Low-population areas / difficulty meeting matching fund requirement
- Consider labor/materials in calculation matching fund requirement
- Rural and urban participation / education / life-skills / responsibility
- 4H and FFA participation
- Junior Points organization
- Accessibility and safety
- Coordination between county fairs and the State Fair
- Language of SB 2390 as a model for this bill
- Administration of grant program, if established

8:35 a.m. Mark Landa, Grand Forks County, testified in favor, answered committee questions, and submitted testimony #43540.

8:42 a.m. Stephanie Johnson, OMB Analyst, provided budget information.

8:48 a.m. Nathan Schneider, President, Burke County Fair, testified in favor and submitted testimony #43607.

8:53 a.m. Mark Hafner, Mercer County, testified in favor.

9:05 a.m. Representative Ostlie, District 12, sponsor of this bill, testified in favor.

9:11 a.m. Diane Schell, President, McLean County Fair, testified in favor.

9:27 a.m. Don Jelsing, Pearce County Fair, testified in favor and submitted testimony #43494.

9:45 a.m. Chris Kubal, McKenzie County, testified in favor and submitted testimony #43603.

9:51 a.m. Christopher Schauer, Hettinger County, testified in favor and submitted testimony #43462.

10:01 a.m. Rick Bauman, Mercer County, testified in favor.

10:07 a.m. John Schneider, Business, Marketing, and Information Director, ND Department of Agriculture, testified in favor, and responded to committee questions.

Additional written testimony:

Lily Harstad, Owner, Rugby Broadcasters, submitted testimony #43443 in favor.

Karen Migler, Auditor, Pierce County, submitted testimony #43456 in favor.

Amber Ritterman, Concerned Citizen, submitted testimony #43472

Cale Dunwoody, Vice President of Public Policy, Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce, submitted testimony #43553 in favor.

Sam Twedt, President, Griggs County 4-H Council, submitted testimony #43555 in favor.

Tony Grindberg, Chairman, Cass County Commission, submitted testimony #43557 in favor.

Stephanie Johnson, President, Griggs County Fair Association, submitted testimony #43560 and #43561 in favor.

Jeff Stachler, Griggs County Fair volunteer, submitted testimony #43604 in favor.

10:12 a.m. Chairman Wanzek closed the hearing.

Carol Thompson, Committee Clerk

RUGBY BROADCASTERS INC.

Geographical Center of North America



*Fresh New Country
All Time Favorites*



*Adult Contemporary Hits
Regional News, Weather and Sports*

Rugby Broadcasters is in support of House Bill HB1591.

We feel it is important for the future of the Pierce County Fair.

Sincerely

Lila Harstad

Owner

Rugby Broadcasters

HB 1591 County Fair Resiliency Grant Program

My name is Karen Migler, Pierce County Auditor, and I am writing to urge you to please give House Bill 1591 a DO PASS recommendation.


Our County is starting all over with their infrastructure in order to have level ground for our Fair. They are moving the location for safety factors and to have more room for more events, to name a couple of reasons. They will need a lot of help getting this project up and running, and getting this piece of land ready for the County Fair. It will take a lot of labor and of course funding. This grant would greatly help out our community to get this infrastructure established.

Having a County Fair is a very important event for our community. My children always looked forward to the annual County Fair. Now my grandchildren are also enjoying it. From the petting zoo, rides, Fair food, 4-H exhibits, to other events, it is all very enjoyable. What a great event for a community to have, to spend time with family & friends.

Please support HB1591 to help our County Fair as well as other communities, for our youth and residents of our counties.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Karen Migler

Pierce County Auditor

Testimony for the County Fair Resiliency Grant bill
Christopher Schauer, President, Adams County Fair Association
Senate Government Operations sub-committee – HB1591
March 24, 2025

Chairman Wanzek and members of the Senate Government Operations sub-Committee, I am writing in support of HB 1591, the County Fair Resiliency Grant Bill. My name is Christopher Schauer and I am the President of the Adams County Fair Association in Hettinger, ND.

County Fairs are part of the fabric of summer and fall in ND with 4H members and the general public submitting their static and livestock exhibits, participating in rodeos, and for many, enjoying the one piece of “culture” that comes to town as entertainment. All of these events form what everyone knows as the “County Fair”. Larger counties have larger fairs, smaller counties have smaller fairs, but all of us participate at our own level in a wholesome activity for all ages, especially 4H youth. In Adams County many of our 4H participants in livestock are owning their own animals for the first time. Their families don’t own livestock and 4H provides the opportunity for them to learn about animal husbandry, where their food comes from, and most importantly, life skills and responsibility. All of these fairs, large or small, have one commonality – facilities. We can’t have a rodeo without an arena; we can’t have a static show without a building, we can’t have a livestock show without pens and a show arena; and we can’t have a band without a stage. Many of these facilities across the state trace their origins to early 1900’s. Our town, Hettinger, was founded in 1907. Over the years we have conducted many capital fundraising efforts to maintain our fairgrounds with the limit funds we have. We maintain our operating budgets on a combination of fundraising and mills, but deferred maintenance and modern buildings don’t fall within those budgets. Building costs have skyrocketed in the past decade and our needs are not being met with our current funds. Some of our current projects that need to be addressed are putting new lights in for our rodeo arena as they are approaching 40 years old and are becoming non-operational, and renovating our main “hoop barn” that was put up 30 years ago and is starting to rip and tear in all of the wrong places. One item of concern for us smaller fairs is how much match is required. We understand the need to have “skin in the game”, but a 1 to 1 match will be difficult to achieve. Providing the opportunity for “in kind” match would also help meet that requirement.

I encourage you to give HB1591 a DO PASS recommendation and give fairs of all sizes a chance to address needed maintenance and building projects so we can continue to provide these services to our communities.

Sincerely,

Christopher Schauer
President, Adams County Fair Association

Amber Ritterman
701-693-5321
amber.ritterman@agcountry.com

Senator Terry Wanzek, Chair
Senator Robert Erbele, Vice Chair
Government Operations Sub-committee

Regarding HB 1591 | A bill for an Act to provide an appropriation to the agriculture commissioner for a county fair resiliency grant program.

Greetings,

My name is Amber Ritterman. I am a concerned and active community member in rural North Dakota. I am also a wife, mother, agriculture advocate and financial officer. I contribute countless time, money, and effort to sustain agricultural support in our rural communities. Much of this effort comes in the form of supporting our 4H, FFA, and County Fair programs. I am testifying today in support of HB 1591 to provide a grant program to support our local county fairs across North Dakota.

I have lived in Rugby, North Dakota serving our communities as a financial officer for AgCountry Farm Credit Services for the past 10 years. I previously grew up on a farm near Harvey, North Dakota. I have seen firsthand how our County Fairs bring the community and surrounding communities together in fellowship, entertainment, and most importantly, support of agriculture. Farmers and ranchers work endlessly to help prepare their children to enter their animals or projects to the fair for not only judging, but for everyone to see. They work hard and take great pride in their projects. These students learn skills that cannot be taught in a classroom. Personally, I have submitted projects myself in my early years, as well as served as a judge for 4H and FFA events that take place at the Pierce County Fair. Seeing the passion these children ages 5-18 have for agriculture and their willingness to give back and advocate constantly reaffirms why I do what I do and why I choose to live in a rural community.

I felt the need to testify in support of this bill as we would not be able to provide these opportunities for our next generations in agriculture without the appropriate structures and facilities to host them. We cannot bring a steer or sheep into a high school gymnasium; we'd need a barn. We cannot provide the sense of community around the County Fair without the proper facilities to host projects and house animals at the same location as they're being displayed. Our County Fair Board puts their whole heart into organizing a fun, engaging and educational fair that has a long history of success behind it. I know many other counties have done the same. This is a part of rural North Dakota that we work so hard to sustain. Having access to funding for facilities to host these events is crucial to the maintaining their existence.

If you truly believe, as I do, the importance of keeping our County Fairs thriving for years to come, I urge you to give this bill a "Do Pass" recommendation.

Thank you, Senator Wanzek, for taking the time to read my testimony. Your consideration is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Amber Ritterman
701-693-5321

Chairman Terry Wanzek and members of the Senate, thank you for the opportunity to speak before you. My name is Don Jelsing. I represent the Pierce County Fair in Rugby. All of the county fairs in North Dakota have been in existence for a different number of years so we all have different needs for our infrastructure. Saying that, we all do have our own needs that need to be addressed. The Pierce County Fair in Rugby is totally in need of help, right from the start as we have needed to move our fair completely to new grounds. We basically don't have any infrastructure. We have no electricity, water, building or bathrooms. We have a long road ahead of us. Maybe I shouldn't have stated it quite that way, because we don't have any roads at all. Other fairs have some infrastructure but are still in need of some help. Many structures around the state are 50 plus years old and some are even close to being condemned. Some fairs take some money from general funds to fix and repair, just to get by.

The Pierce County Fair is 27 years old and we are questionably the newest fair in the state. Some fairs get some local help but it's not enough to keep up with what's needed for infrastructure upkeep. So here we are. Welcome to our world they say. I was one of the two people in Rugby who started the fair 27 years ago. I can honestly tell you all that I have gotten to know many of the people who operate their county fair in the state and believe me I don't know of any other group of people who are more dedicated to working hard to see their fair succeed in their community.... And most of us do it with no pay. Some of us even put in our own money to keep it going. I've been the president of the Chamber of Commerce, leader of the Ag Committee in Rugby, been on the board of our local Heart of America Medical Center and more. I can tell you that county fair boards care deeply about our fairs and the youth involved in them. The fairs bring such a blessing, not just to the communities as a whole but to families, their children and the elderly. We are not just some people who make a phone call to hire a carnival. Any of you who have been on a fair board know this. We all have some trouble finding volunteers to be on our boards.

WHY?? Because it's a lot of work and hours. In saying all of this, don't get me wrong, I'm not complaining about it. Just stating some facts. We all relish the sight and thought of all the youth in 4-H clubs and the ladies in the community who enter a project in the open class division. The youth involved in fair projects have worked on their projects for months. So, how does this tie in with infrastructure, the reason we are all here. Because, without some decent infrastructure, we have no fairs, we have no livestock shows, we have no static exhibit shows, we have no youth to show their projects that they have worked on most of the year with their families and GUESS WHAT? We have no fairs, period! I believe that you can see the importance of keeping this strong family organization. Our communities, our families, our youth in North Dakota are asking for your help. We also ask you to reconsider the idea of putting a 1 to 1 matching funds stipulation onto this original bill, as many of the smaller fairs can not afford that. time ??.....We respectfully ask you to give HB1591 a DO PASS. God bless you all and we pray that you do the right thing.....

MEMORIES?? Well, how in the world do memories fit in with talking about fixing a water line? If you would be so kind to let me tell you a little story. In the year 1999..... I believe that there is not a single person in this room that cannot see and feel, how life experiences at the county fair can or did change your life or someone else's life, forever. Are we looking to get paid more on the board? OOPS! That's right, most of us DON'T GET PAID! We do it for the community. Without maintaining the infrastructure of those memories, there won't be those county fairs, along with those memories. Sometimes there are facilities that can be repaired, many times they just have to be replaced. We ask that you be a major part in the future of our youth and our communities in North Dakota. Some of us receive some funding from a mill levy through the county. Some of us don't. But when it comes to having to make major infrastructure repairs, it does not go very far. We at the Pierce County Fair receive no mill levy because a few years ago

the legislature passed a law with prohibits county commissioners from allowing them to put a mill levy on for a county fair. That does not pertain to fairs that are grandfathered in.

Before I leave you, I want you to seriously look at something. A 300-piece puzzle. What do you see? Take a real good look at this, what do you see? You can certainly see a county fair, cattle, crops, barns and more? What I see is the names of 300 people, all volunteers, who were proud to be a part of a community event, a county fair that looks toward the future. Looking forward to watching their children grow up with good working values in their 4-H and FFA projects. Our county fair is very much an agricultural fair and heavily supported by the community and its businesses. The hotels have many reservations from reunions and visiting families coming to town to spend time with their community friends at the county fair. Our local newspaper is owned by the Minot Daily News. I think they believe an awful lot about saving our county fairs, otherwise, they would not have put this issue front and center on their paper. We seriously ask you today to consider being a major part in the future of your youth and our communities. I respectfully ask this committee to give House Bill 1591 a DO PASS recommendation. Thank you and God bless you.

Chairman Terry Wanzek and members of the Senate Appropriations-
Government Operations Division Committee

House Bill HB 1591

Monday, March 24, 2025

8:30 am Red River Room, North Dakota State Capital Building

IN SUPPORT OF BILL

Chairman Wanzek and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of House Bill HB 1591, the County Fair Resiliency Grant bill. I strongly support the appropriation of these funds to help county fairs across the State of North Dakota maintain and upgrade facilities, and improve important community assets.

My name is Mark Landa. I serve on the board of directors for the Greater Grand Forks Fair in Grand Forks, ND. I have served as Secretary of the Fair board for 20 years. Prior to my election to the board I was a volunteer with the 4-H program working at the Fair for 11 years. So I have been involved with the Fair and the fair industry for more than 30 years.

Fairgrounds all across North Dakota are gathering places for their communities. There are more than 30 fairgrounds in the state. Each has unique facilities and capabilities. Some are seasonal such as our facilities. Some have buildings that can be used all year round. But each one brings people to their communities for events. That means that they bring dollars to the communities, and sales tax dollars to the state. Improving the facilities should help these fairgrounds attract more people to their events, which should bring even more dollars to our communities and more tax dollars. Therefore, I believe that the economic impact of these facilities is an important reason to support HB 1591.

We don't have good numbers to represent all of the fairgrounds. However, I can share some numbers from our facility. The Grand Forks Fairgrounds has been the fairgrounds for Grand Forks County for more than 120 years. During that time it has hosted a wide range of events including the North Dakota State Fair on many occasions through the 1950s, Grand Forks County Fairs, a wide range of race events, concerts, livestock events, etc. Our racetrack is very popular and is considered one of the top dirt tracks in the country by the World of Outlaws racing circuit. We also have a popular go-kart track and a good horse arena. The community has used the buildings on the grounds for meetings, class reunions, employee appreciation events, entertainment, auction sales, theater productions, etc. The 4-H program uses the facilities for several different purposes in the summer. We have several structures that were built by the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression, dedicated by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and are listed on the National Historic Register. We also have some other buildings that are 25 to 50 years old that are used on a regular basis. All are in need of some level of repair in spite of our efforts to maintain them.

As you know, Grand Forks has several different facilities that support and host events in the community. Events that may be hosted at the Fairgrounds in many communities are hosted at the

Alerus Center, Ralph Engelstad Arena or other facilities in Grand Forks. But most people don't realize that the Fairgrounds is also an important facility from an economic aspect. The Alerus Center reported approximately 279,000 attendees in 2024. This number was up from closer to 200,000 in 2022 and 2023. Ralph Engelstad Arena set a record for attendance in 2024, also attracting approximately 280,000. Both are very significant numbers. The Grand Forks Fairgrounds attracts between 80-100,000 people every year operating for approximately 4 months in the summer. The first event is usually held some time in May depending on the weather and the last in the middle of September. The Fairgrounds is the 3rd most utilized event facility in Grand Forks and is only open for a portion of the year.

I have attached 2 forms to this testimony, both provided by Julie Rygg, Executive Director of Visit Greater Grand Forks. The first is a letter that Ms. Rygg provided when we applied for a Destination Development Grant in 2023. It highlights the economic impact of several events held at the Fairgrounds in 2022. Most are race events held at River Cities Speedway. It lists an average impact of more than \$243,000 for a regular Friday night race weekend. They normally race every Friday from some time in May through the middle of September plus a few special events on other nights. It also shows impacts of \$650-700,000 for every special event weekend at the track. It is missing a 2nd World of Outlaws Sprint Cars race normally held in August, which was rained out in 2022. If that was added to the list of events in the letter you would see an economic impact in the Grand Forks community of more than \$6,000,000. That does not include many of the smaller events held every summer such as go-kart races held every Wednesday evening all summer that attract 3-500 people every week, or multiple horse show and barrel races held in the horse arena all summer.

The second page is an Event Impact Summary of the Greater Grand Forks Fair in 2024. It shows a direct impact of \$466,166 in sales through the Fair, and a total of \$716,172 in sales for the community. The weather cooperated with us for the most part in 2024, so it was a good year. Those numbers should continue to grow as we make improvements in facilities at the Fairgrounds.

HB 1591 will help provide funding that we can use to make repairs and improvements to our facilities. We currently have a list of well over \$1,000,000 worth of repairs and improvements we need to make, and several million dollars more in projects that we will either need to make or would like to make in the future. These repairs and improvements will help us keep the facilities safe and make them both more comfortable and more appealing for our guests. They will also allow us to do more things on the grounds that can attract more people. So this investment by the state would benefit the Grand Forks area as well as the state of North Dakota.

I ask that you vote for a Do Pass Recommendation on HB 1591.



August 30, 2023

Holly R. Miller
ND Department of Commerce
Tourism Division
1600 East Century Ave, Suite 6
Bismarck, ND 58503

Dear Holly:

On behalf of Visit Greater Grand Forks, I would like to offer support for the Greater Grand Forks Fair Board and the efforts to secure a Destination Development Grant. The improvements planned will have a significant impact on the facilities and the events which draw tens of thousands of visitors to our community each year. These changes will also provide the opportunity to expand current offerings, which will attract even more attendees from within and outside North Dakota.

The fairgrounds host events regularly that provide substantial economic impact for our city, county and state. For your reference here are just a few:

- Premier Racing // Fridays May through September - \$243,712 per week
- World of Outlaws Sprint Cars // June 2022 - \$662,167
- Greater Grand Forks County Fair // June 2022 - \$409,419
- World of Outlaws Late Models & IRA vs NOSA King of Wings // July 2022 - \$656,088
- John Seitz Memorial // September 2022 - \$705,032

Visit Greater Grand Forks subscribes to the Destinations International Economic Impact Calculator to generate the figures above.

As a destination marketing organization, we strive to not only entice visitors to Greater Grand Forks, but also ensure their enjoyment while they are here, and modernized facilities are crucial to achieving those goals. It is also important to note a visitor, whether in town for leisure, tournament, convention or business, has the potential to become a future resident.

Thank you so much for your consideration and this wonderful opportunity for our community! Please contact me with any questions you may have by phone (800.866.4566) or e-mail (julie@visitgrandforks.com).

Sincerely,

Julie Rygg
Executive Director

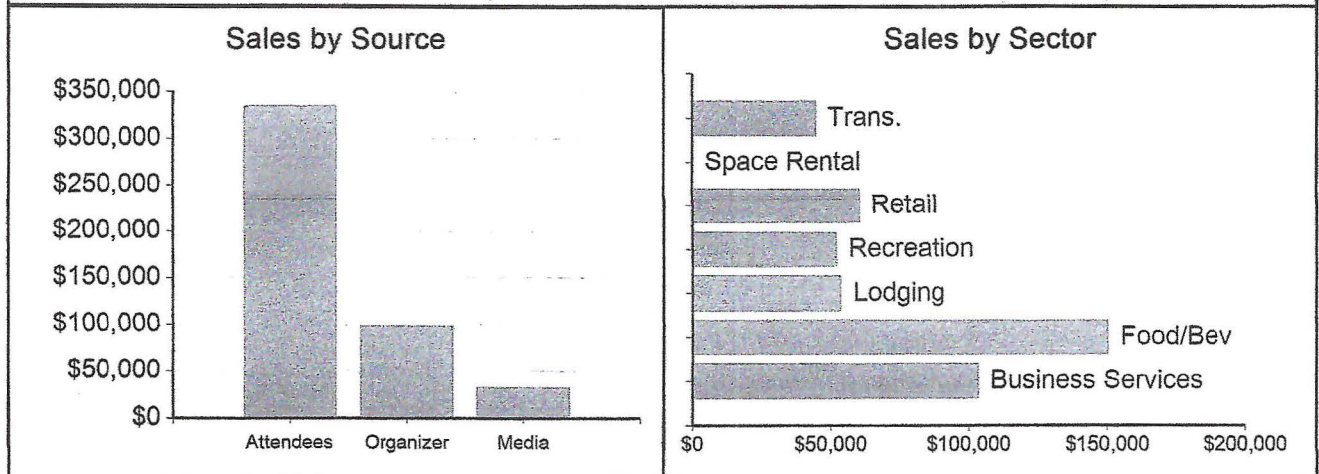
4251 Gateway Drive, Grand Forks, ND 58203
701.746.0444 | 800.866.4566
VisitGrandForks.com

Event Impact Summary

Destination: Greater Grand Forks Convention & Visitors Bureau

Event Parameters		Key Results	
Event Name:	2024 Greater Grand Forks Fair	Business Sales (Direct):	\$466,166
Organization:	Greater Grand Forks Fair	Business Sales (Total):	\$716,172
Event Type:	Other cultural (commemorations, religious, heritage, special interests, parades)	Jobs Supported (Direct):	156
Start Date:	6/19/2024	Jobs Supported (Total):	175
End Date:	6/23/2024	Local Taxes (Total):	\$12,007
Overnight Attendees:	156	Net Direct Tax ROI:	\$9,938
Day Attendees:	7666	Estimated Room Demand:	241

Direct Business Sales



Industry	Attendees	Organizer	Media/Sponsors	Total
Lodging	\$28,359	\$25,594	\$0	\$53,953
Transportation	\$44,140	\$522	\$143	\$44,805
Food & Beverage	\$149,476	\$500	\$402	\$150,378
Retail	\$60,745	\$0	\$0	\$60,745
Recreation	\$52,404	\$0	\$0	\$52,404
Space Rental	\$0	\$0	\$161	\$161
Business Services	\$0	\$72,023	\$31,697	\$103,720
TOTAL	\$335,124	\$98,639	\$32,403	\$466,166



Letter of Support – HB 1591

Monday, March 24, 2025

Chairman Wanzek and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee - Government Operations Division,

For the record, my name is Cale Dunwoody, and I have the distinct pleasure of serving as the Vice President of Public Policy for the Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce (FMWF Chamber). On behalf of our over 1,700 members, I respectfully offer testimony in support of House Bill 1591.

At the FMWF Chamber, our mission is to protect and promote business, inspire individuals, cultivate communities, and influence action. Our region is proud to boast the Red River Valley Fairgrounds (RRVFG) which serves as an important community hub providing entertainment, education, and connection. This facility hosts many impactful agriculture events and programs throughout the year, such as the Big Iron Farm Show, FFA and 4-H Exhibits, and the Agriculture Education Center.

- **The Big Iron Farm Show:** In 2023, more than 60,000 attendees came from across the nation and several other countries to see demonstrations, visit 900+ exhibit booths, connect with their peers and attend training sessions.
- **FFA and 4-H Exhibits:** In 2024, the fair had over 12,100 FFA and 4-H static exhibits that were displayed for attendees to view. Additionally, in 2024 the RRVFG hosted 4-H programming for students to engage in livestock showing, a livestock quiz, and a variety of agricultural exhibits.
- **Agriculture Education Center:** Since the renovation and reopening of the AG Education Center, the RRVFG has hosted numerous fieldtrips for hundreds of area students. Providing kids and families with interactive and educational experiences to learn about our region's agriculture.

The combined events and programing at the RRVFG generate an estimated annual \$150 million in economic impact. This includes direct revenue from the fair, spending from out-of-town visitors (hotels, restaurants, retail, etc.), and regional economic activity from travel. This facility also serves as an attraction tool for the workforce. In the current labor market, quality-of-life assets and placemaking infrastructure are key to attracting and retaining workforce. The RRVFG serves as a critical community asset that energizes our community by bringing year-round placemaking opportunities – improving the quality of life of residents throughout North Dakota.

The RRVFG is an essential part of our region – generating economic activity, entertainment, and educational opportunities for our community. We recognize the impact and importance of fairgrounds across North Dakota and urge the committee to a this bill a DO PASS to support critical infrastructure at fairs across the state.



Thank you for your attention to this matter and your commitment to North Dakota.

Sincerely,

Cale Dunwoody
Vice President of Public Policy
Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce

March 23, 2025

Sam Twedt
President of Griggs County 4-H Council

Chairman Luick and members of the Senate Agriculture Committee,

This is Sam Twedt, President of the Griggs County 4-H Council. All Griggs County 4-H Council officers and Past President, Matt Haugen are in support of HB1591.

In the 2023 to 2024 4-H year, the Griggs County 4-H membership consisted of 11 Cloverbud 4-H members, 53 regular 4-H club members, and 32 4-H Archery Special Interest Group members. This very active and motivated group exhibited 30 additional static exhibits and nine additional animal exhibits compared to the previous 4-H year. There were and total of 29 beef animal exhibits last year making the large livestock barn so full of animals the goats and sheep exhibits had to be placed under a tent outside of the building.

The average age of Griggs County 4-H members showing animals and static exhibits last year was approximately 11 years old, meaning there are many more years 4-H members will be entering a greater number of exhibits creating additional lack of space problems in the future.

Due to the increase in 4-H exhibits at the Griggs County Fair, I already mentioned all goat and sheep exhibits must be housed under a tent. With the lack of space for animal exhibits and regulations on safely exhibit poultry at the fair, we have been unable to allow poultry exhibits to stay at the fairgrounds during the Griggs County Fair for the past two years. Another concern of the Griggs County 4-H Council is the lack of a large indoor animal show arena. Sheep, goat, swine, dairy, and beef exhibits must be shown outside in the hot sun and potential for rainfall interfering with the animal shows. An indoor animal show arena would provide greater safety to 4-H members and parents, spectators, and the animals.

The Griggs County Fair Association has discussed the construction of a new multi-purpose building to help alleviate these space issues for 4-H members during the fair, but the Fair Association has lacked the funds to construct any new buildings.

There is also interest in expanding the Griggs County 4-H Shooting Sports program beyond 4-H archery, however there is no longer a suitable location in Griggs County to allow 4-H members to practice shooting sports indoors leading to another problem for the Griggs County 4-H program.

The Griggs County Fair Association is interested in constructing a new multi-purpose building providing more space for 4-H animal and static exhibits, additional fair association activities, a large wedding and meeting venue for the county, space for the Griggs County 4-H Shooting Sports program, Griggs County Central School

National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP), an indoor shooting practice location for the Griggs County Wildlife Club, and many other community-wide activities throughout the year. However, the Griggs County Fair Association currently does not have sufficient funds to complete this construction project. The money from HB 1591 will significantly assist in the construction of a new multi-purpose building benefiting many Griggs County citizens,

We also request the funding match be less than 1:1 making it easier to obtain the entire \$100,000 grant without securing \$100,000 of local money.

The Griggs County 4-H Council is very appreciative of the creation of HB1591 and fully supports the passage of this bill to help support the Griggs County Fair Association, Griggs County 4-H program, and Griggs County citizens. Please vote yes for HB1591.

Sincerely,

Sam Twedt
Griggs County 4-H Council President

Letter submitted with support of Carolyn Abraham, Vice President, Stephanie Ramsey, Secretary, Jessica Haugen, Treasurer, and Matt Haugen, Past President

**Board of County
Commissioners**

Tony Grindberg
Duane Breitling
Tim Flakoll
Jim Kapitan
Joel Vettel



PO Box 2806
211 Ninth Street South
Fargo, North Dakota 58108
701-241-5609
www.casscountynd.gov

March 24, 2025

Chairman Terry M. Wanzek
Members of Senate Appropriations – Government Operations Division
North Dakota State Capitol
600 East Boulevard
Bismarck, ND 58505-0360

RE: HB 1591

Chairman Wanzek and Members of Senate Appropriations – Government Operations Division:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 1591, one-time funding for the County Fair Resiliency Grant Program. The Cass County Commission has worked closely with Cody Cashman, CEO of the Red River Valley Fair Association to understand the infrastructure and maintenance needs of the Red River Valley Fairgrounds.

Thanks to the hard work of Mr. Cashman, the Commission has a better understanding that many county fairgrounds across North Dakota have similar infrastructure and deferred maintenance needs as the Red River Valley Fairgrounds. Mr. Cashman has forged partnerships to help county fair associations speak with unified message is describing the fairgrounds needs across North Dakota

Because agricultural-based county fairs are such a fundamental part of the state's history and culture, it is appropriate, if not vital, that this funding source be available to county agricultural fair associations to begin addressing the serious infrastructure and maintenance needs of many of North Dakota's county fairs.

We urge your support of HB 1591 and this critically important investment in North Dakota's county fairs.

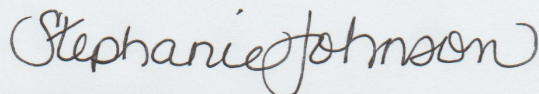
Sincerely,

Chairman Tony Grindberg
Cass County Commission

We also request the funding match be less than 1:1 making it easier to obtain the entire \$100,000 grant without securing \$100,000 of local money.

The Griggs County Fair Association is very appreciative of the creation of HB1591 and fully supports the passage of this bill to help support the Griggs County Fair Association, Griggs County 4-H program, and the Griggs County citizens. Please vote yes for HB1591.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephanie Johnson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Stephanie Johnson
Griggs County Fair Association President

Letter submitted with support of Matt Haugen, Vice President, Jessica Haugen, Secretary, Emily Waldo, Treasurer, and fair board members Lexi Broschat, Jerry Hohertz, Stephanie Edland (Griggs County Commissioner), Shae Lynn Ludlow, Chad Johnson, and Samantha Harris

March 23, 2025

Stephanie Johnson
President of Griggs County Fair Association

Chairman Luick and members of the Senate Agriculture Committee,

This is Stephanie Johnson, President of the Griggs County Fair Association. All officers and the remaining Griggs County Fair Association members are in support of HB1591.

Over the last 5 years, the Griggs County Fair Association has been considering a major building expansion, which later was determined not to be worth the money and later discussions of construction of a new building, but the Griggs County Fair Association does not have enough money to construct the necessary building.

The Griggs County Fair Association has desired a building expansion and later a new building construction due to the lack of space during the county fair and offering a place for community activities throughout the year.

The Griggs County 4-H program continues to increase membership leading to increasing animal and static exhibits causing a lack of space for all of the entries. All goat and sheep exhibits now must be placed under a tent during the fair and due to the restrictions on exhibiting poultry at the fair requiring additional space for poultry exhibits, poultry exhibits have not been housed at the fairgrounds for the past two years.

In 2024, the Griggs County Fair Association was forced to purchase two new tents to provide protection for new events during the 2024 Griggs County Fair and the need for additional space for previous events. The Griggs County Fair Board did not want to purchase these tents, but due to the lack of funds to begin construction of a more advanced multi-purpose building, the fair association was forced to purchase these tents.

The Griggs County Fair Association is interested in constructing a new multi-purpose building providing more space for 4-H animal and static exhibits, additional fair association activities, a large wedding and meeting venue for the county, space for the Griggs County 4-H Shooting Sports program, Griggs County Central School National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP), an indoor shooting practice location for the Griggs County Wildlife Club, and many other community-wide activities throughout the year. However, the Griggs County Fair Association currently does not have sufficient funds to complete this construction project. The money from HB 1591 will significantly assist in the construction of a new multi-purpose building benefiting many Griggs County citizens,

Chris Kubal
McKenzie County Ag Expo
Director
701-580-2976
ckubal@co.mckenzie.nd.us

To The Senate Appropriations Committee,

The McKenzie County Ag Expo was opened in the summer of 2023. It is a brand-new facility in a brand-new location. I believe what the Expo has done for McKenzie County is huge and can be replicated at other fairground facilities around the state. Just some bullet points of our first full year in business in 2024

- We had over 118 different events throughout the year
- With those events we had over 220 days booked and some of those events happened on the same day
- In 2024 we had over 60,000 visitors through the doors, Watford City has a population of 6,700 in the last census
- Out of the 60,000 visitors, over 41% of those were from outside of McKenzie County
- With these numbers it equates to close to \$4,000,000 in economic impacts to Watford City and McKenzie County
- The Ag Expo also creates jobs in McKenzie County with soon to be 10 full-time employees and 12 event staff
- The future is bright at the Ag Expo with the numbers forecasted for the 2025 events we are going to easily surpass 2024 numbers

Every fairground around the state plays a huge part in supporting the future youth through the 4-H and FFA organizations. Every fair for a few days brings in a bit of friendly competitions and entertainment for their communities. They also have the opportunities to use their facility throughout the year for other community events that bring in economic growth for everyone.

Thanks for your consideration and support of all fairgrounds throughout the state



Chris Kubal
McKenzie County Ag Expo Director

March 24, 2025

Jeff Stachler

Chairman Luick and members of the Senate Agriculture Committee,

This is Jeff Stachler, former NDSU Extension Griggs County Agent and Griggs County Fair Association member and current Griggs County Fair Association volunteer and I support HB1591.

I arrived at the NDSU Extension Griggs County Agent in September 2020. I resigned from my position September 30, 2024. During this time period the Griggs County 4-H Program grew to a total membership of 96 4-H members! We wanted to start an 4-H archery program back in 2022 to 2023 4-H year, but there was no place for us to practice. In 2023 to 2024, we kicked off the first Griggs County 4-H Archery Special Interest Group and began competition because we paired with the Griggs County Central School NASP program where they were practicing. That location will no longer allow archery practices and the location this year for NASP was damaged from the winter leaving no space for archery students and 4-H member in Griggs County to practice.

The growth in Griggs County 4-H membership also occurred in regular community clubs resulting in a significant increase in 4-H exhibits to the point of housing the goats and sheep under a tent the last two years. There is not enough space for all of the animal exhibits! In addition due to poultry exhibiting rules, the Griggs County 4-H members having poultry exhibits have not been allowed to have their animals at the fair due to this lack of space.

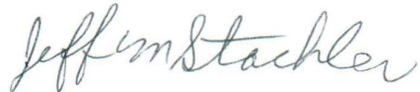
The Griggs County Fair Association has been trying to provide a new location for these practices to occur along with many other community activities, but doesn't have the funds to construct the type of building the community needs to have many activities!

The Griggs County Fair Association is interested in constructing a new multi-purpose building providing more space for 4-H animal and static exhibits, additional fair association activities, a large wedding and meeting venue for the county, space for the Griggs County 4-H Shooting Sports program, Griggs County Central School National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP), an indoor shooting practice location for the Griggs County Wildlife Club, and many other community-wide activities throughout the year. However, the Griggs County Fair Association currently does not have sufficient funds to complete this construction project. The money from HB 1591 will significantly assist in the construction of a new multi-purpose building benefiting many Griggs County citizens,

We also request the funding match be less than 1:1 making it easier to obtain the entire \$100,000 grant without securing \$100,000 of local money.

I greatly appreciate the creation of HB1591 and fully support the passage of this bill to support the Griggs County Fair Association, Griggs County 4-H program, and Griggs County citizens. Please vote yes for HB1591.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeff Stachler". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Jeff Stachler

Former NDSU Extension Griggs County Agent and Griggs County Fair Association member and current Griggs County Fair Association volunteer



Burke County Fair Association
PO Box 202
Bowbells, ND 58721

March 20, 2025

Chairman Wanzek and committee members, I am writing to you respectively about the North Dakota House Bill 1591. While a county fair infrastructure bill is something that all small county fairs dream of, the sad reality is that some of us that need it most will not be able to obtain it as written.

Burke County is a very small county in North Dakota consisting of only around 2,200 residents. Our beloved county is federally designated as a historically underutilized business area. We struggle to bring new businesses and residents/families to our county. Burke County has limited recreational activities and events for our residents and their families to participate in. The Burke County Fair, which originated in 1916 is one of the few that we have to offer.

Like most other fairs, we have seen a decline in numbers over the 20 past years in our 4H programs for our kids and overall attendance. Since our new board was put in place in the last couple of years, we have seen that being reversed. Our attendance numbers are increasing dramatically and we are finally bringing new blood to Burke County. We are offering entertainment and new activities that our county has never seen.

Our emphasis has been promoting our great county and what we have to offer. Whether it is our wonderful small communities and schools, our fantastic emergency responders and departments, our agriculture and energy expansions, and our local businesses, we want to show North Dakota what Burke County has to offer.

Like many other fairs and organizations our biggest issue is funding. In 2024, we received less than a 1/3 of what we needed to put on our small county fair even without a carnival. Due to our generous sponsors and donors, we raised enough money to make this happen. The only issue is, there is not enough meat left on the bone for grounds and infrastructure improvements. Every building on our grounds is in dire need of improvement. Whether its leaking roofs, structurally failing buildings, or an aged unsafe electrical system, WE NEED HELP.

While I do strongly support the original HB1591, the amendment that was added does not help us. Essentially upon adding the amendment which includes the 1 to 1 match, the grant funding has become unattainable for us. I consider our fair to be on the same list with the many others that need this infrastructure grant the most, but sadly, I do think it is out of our community's reach. I ask you to add an amendment for a lower match based on a counties population.

Respectfully,

Nathan Schneider
President
Burke County Fair Association

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Appropriations - Government Operations Division Red River Room, State Capitol

HB 1591
3/24/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the agriculture commissioner for a county fair resiliency grant program.

2:50 p.m. Chairman Wanzek opened the hearing.

Members present: Chairman Wanzek, Vice-Chair Dwyer, Senator Burckhard, Senator Erbele, and Senator Sickler.

Discussion Topics:

- Ratio of matching state funds to county funds
- County fair attendance
- Test-run for a limited number of counties (new program)
- In-kind donations
- Administration of program
- Balanced budget constraints

2:52 p.m. John Schneider, Business, Marketing, and Information Division Director, ND Department of Agriculture, testified in favor, responded to committee questions, and submitted testimony #43692.

3:22 p.m. Chairman Wanzek closed the hearing.

Carol Thompson, Committee Clerk

HB 1591 3-18-25

Sixty-ninth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

**PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO
FIRST ENGROSSMENT
ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL NO. 1591**

Introduced by

Representatives Ostlie, Grueneich, Jonas, Novak, Pyle, Satrom, Schreiber-Beck, Stemen
Senators Conley, Meyer, Wanzek

1 A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the agriculture commissioner for a county fair
2 resiliency grant program.

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

4 **SECTION 1. APPROPRIATION - AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER - COUNTY FAIR**

5 **RESILIENCY GRANT PROGRAM - ONE-TIME FUNDING.** There is appropriated out of any
6 moneys in the general fund in the state treasury, not otherwise appropriated, the sum of
7 \$3,000,000, or so much of the sum as may be necessary, to the agriculture commissioner for
8 the purpose of providing grants to county agriculture fair associations for the planning, design,
9 and construction of infrastructure projects, for the biennium beginning July 1, 2025, and ending
10 June 30, 2027. The agriculture commissioner may not award more than \$100,000 to a county
11 agriculture fair association under this program. A grant recipient must provide one dollar of
12 matching funds from nonstate sources for each dollar provided by the agriculture
13 commissioner.

14 The funding in this section is considered a one-time funding item.

15 **SECTION 2. AMENDMENT.** The agriculture commissioner shall create guidelines for
16 administering the grants that include requirement for matching of funds. Every dollar of local

**PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO
FIRST ENGROSSMENT
ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL NO. 1591**

- 1 funds may be eligible for an awarded between one dollar and four dollars of matching state
- 2 funds, based on county population, administered through this program.

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Appropriations - Government Operations Division Red River Room, State Capitol

HB 1591
3/25/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the agriculture commissioner for a county fair resiliency grant program.

8:31 a.m. Chairman Wanzek opened the meeting.

Members present: Chairman Wanzek, Vice-Chair Dwyer, Senator Burckhard, Senator Erbele, and Senator Sickler.

Discussion Topics:

- Appropriation reduction
- Matching funds guidelines
- In-kind contributions

8:36 a.m. Senator Sickler moved to adopt the Amendments, 25.1256.03001, testimony #43731.

8:36 a.m. Senator Erbele seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Terry M. Wanzek	Y
Senator Randy A. Burckhard	Y
Senator Michael Dwyer	Y
Senator Robert Erbele	Y
Senator Jonathan Sickler	Y

Motion passed 5-0-0.

8:37 a.m. Senator Erbele moved a Do Pass as Amended for HB 1591.

8:37 a. m. Senator Sickler seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Terry M. Wanzek	Y
Senator Randy A. Burckhard	Y
Senator Michael Dwyer	Y
Senator Robert Erbele	Y
Senator Jonathan Sickler	Y

Motion passed 5-0-0.

Senator Erbele will carry this bill.

8:37 a.m. Chairman Wanzek closed the hearing.

Carol Thompson, Committee Clerk

25.1256.03001
Title.
Fiscal No. 1

Prepared by the Legislative Council
staff for Senate Appropriations -
Government Operations Division
Committee

March 24, 2025

Sixty-ninth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO FIRST ENGROSSMENT

ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL NO. 1591

Introduced by

Representatives Ostlie, Grueneich, Jonas, Novak, Pyle, Satrom, Schreiber-Beck, Stemen
Senators Conley, Meyer, Wanzek

1 A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the agriculture commissioner for a county fair
2 resiliency grant program.

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

4 **SECTION 1. APPROPRIATION - AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER - COUNTY FAIR**
5 **RESILIENCY GRANT PROGRAM - ONE-TIME FUNDING.** There is appropriated out of any
6 moneys in the general fund in the state treasury, not otherwise appropriated, the sum of
7 ~~\$3,000,000~~ \$1,500,000, or so much of the sum as may be necessary, to the agriculture
8 commissioner for the purpose of providing grants to county agriculture fair associations for the
9 planning, design, and construction of infrastructure projects, for the biennium beginning July 1,
10 2025, and ending June 30, 2027. The agriculture commissioner may not award more than
11 \$100,000 to a county agriculture fair association under this program. ~~A grant recipient must~~
12 ~~provide one dollar of matching funds from nonstate sources for each dollar provided by the~~
13 ~~agriculture commissioner.~~ The agriculture commissioner shall create guidelines to distribute the
14 grant funding, including the requirement for a recipient to provide one dollar of matching funds
15 from nonstate sources for up to two dollars of grant funding received. The guidelines may
16 provide for matching funds to be provided in the form of cash or in-kind contributions. The
17 appropriation in this section is considered a one-time funding item.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE OF AMENDMENT:**House Bill No. 1591 - Department of Agriculture - Senate Action**

	Base Budget	House Version	Senate Changes	Senate Version
County fair resiliency grants		\$3,000,000	(\$1,500,000)	\$1,500,000
Total all funds	\$0	\$3,000,000	(\$1,500,000)	\$1,500,000
Less estimated income	0	0	0	0
General fund	\$0	\$3,000,000	(\$1,500,000)	\$1,500,000
FTE	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Department 602 - Department of Agriculture - Detail of Senate Changes

	Reduces Funding for Grants ¹	Total Senate Changes
County fair resiliency grants	(\$1,500,000)	(\$1,500,000)
Total all funds	(\$1,500,000)	(\$1,500,000)
Less estimated income	0	0
General fund	(\$1,500,000)	(\$1,500,000)
FTE	0.00	0.00

¹ One-time funding for county fair resiliency grants is reduced from \$3 million to \$1.5 million and matching funds requirements are adjusted.

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Appropriations Committee Harvest Room, State Capitol

HB 1591
3/28/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the agriculture commissioner for a county fair resiliency grant program.

9:07 a.m. Vice-Chairman Erbele opened the hearing.

Members Present: Vice-Chairman Erbele, and Senators Burckhard, Cleary, Conley, Davison, Dever, Dwyer, Magrum, Mathern, Meyer, Schaible, Sickler, Sorvaag, Thomas, Wanzek.

Members Absent: Chairman Bekkedahl.

Discussion Topics:

- Amount Awarded Per Grant Recipient
- Program Interest and Demand
- Matching Fund Ratio
- Non-State Sourcing for Matching Funds
- Emergency Clause

9:07 a.m. Senator Erbele introduced the bill and submitted testimony #44368.

9:16 a.m. Senator Wanzek moved amendment LC 25.1256.03001.

9:16 a.m. Senator Conley seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Brad Bekkedahl	A
Senator Robert Erbele	Y
Senator Randy A. Burckhard	Y
Senator Sean Cleary	Y
Senator Cole Conley	Y
Senator Kyle Davison	Y
Senator Dick Dever	Y
Senator Michael Dwyer	Y
Senator Jeffery J. Magrum	Y
Senator Tim Mathern	Y
Senator Scott Meyer	Y
Senator Donald Schaible	Y
Senator Jonathan Sickler	Y
Senator Ronald Sorvaag	Y
Senator Paul J. Thomas	Y
Senator Terry M. Wanzek	Y

Motion Passed 15-0-1.

9:18 a.m. Senator Davison moved to further amend by adding an emergency clause.

9:18 a.m. Senator Wanzek seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Brad Bekkedahl	A
Senator Robert Erbele	Y
Senator Randy A. Burckhard	Y
Senator Sean Cleary	Y
Senator Cole Conley	Y
Senator Kyle Davison	Y
Senator Dick Dever	Y
Senator Michael Dwyer	Y
Senator Jeffery J. Magrum	Y
Senator Tim Mathern	Y
Senator Scott Meyer	Y
Senator Donald Schaible	Y
Senator Jonathan Sickler	Y
Senator Ronald Sorvaag	Y
Senator Paul J. Thomas	Y
Senator Terry M. Wanzek	Y

Motion Passed 15-0-1.

9:20 a.m. Senator Wanzek moved a Do Pass as Amended.

9:20 a.m. Senator Burckhard seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Brad Bekkedahl	A
Senator Robert Erbele	Y
Senator Randy A. Burckhard	Y
Senator Sean Cleary	Y
Senator Cole Conley	Y
Senator Kyle Davison	Y
Senator Dick Dever	Y
Senator Michael Dwyer	Y
Senator Jeffery J. Magrum	Y
Senator Tim Mathern	Y
Senator Scott Meyer	Y
Senator Donald Schaible	Y
Senator Jonathan Sickler	Y
Senator Ronald Sorvaag	Y
Senator Paul J. Thomas	Y
Senator Terry M. Wanzek	Y

Motion Passed 15-0-1.

Senator Erbele will carry the bill.

9:21 a.m. Vice-Chairman Erbele closed the hearing.

Elizabeth Reiten, Committee Clerk

Bill was reconsidered on 04/01/25.

March 28, 2025

CO
3/28/25
10f1

Sixty-ninth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO FIRST ENGROSSMENT

ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL NO. 1591

Introduced by

Representatives Ostlie, Grueneich, Jonas, Novak, Pyle, Satrom, Schreiber-Beck, Stemen

Senators Conley, Meyer, Wanzek

1 A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the agriculture commissioner for a county fair
2 resiliency grant program; and to declare an emergency.

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

4 **SECTION 1. APPROPRIATION - AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER - COUNTY FAIR**

5 **RESILIENCY GRANT PROGRAM - ONE-TIME FUNDING.** There is appropriated out of any

6 moneys in the general fund in the state treasury, not otherwise appropriated, the sum of

7 ~~\$3,000,000~~ \$1,500,000, or so much of the sum as may be necessary, to the agriculture

8 commissioner for the purpose of providing grants to county agriculture fair associations for the

9 planning, design, and construction of infrastructure projects, for the ~~biennium beginning July 1,~~

10 2025 period beginning with the effective date of this Act, and ending June 30, 2027. The

11 agriculture commissioner may not award more than \$100,000 to a county agriculture fair

12 association under this program. ~~A grant recipient must provide one dollar of matching funds~~

13 ~~from nonstate sources for each dollar provided by the agriculture commissioner.~~ The agriculture

14 commissioner shall create guidelines to distribute the grant funding, including the requirement

15 for a recipient to provide one dollar of matching funds from nonstate sources for up to

16 two dollars of grant funding received. The guidelines may provide for matching funds to be

17 provided in the form of cash or in-kind contributions. The appropriation in this section is

18 considered a one-time funding item.

19 **SECTION 2. EMERGENCY.** This Act is declared to be an emergency measure.

25.1256.03001
Title.
Fiscal No. 1

Prepared by the Legislative Council
staff for Senate Appropriations -
Government Operations Division
Committee

March 24, 2025

Sixty-ninth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO FIRST ENGROSSMENT

ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL NO. 1591

Introduced by

Representatives Ostlie, Grueneich, Jonas, Novak, Pyle, Satrom, Schreiber-Beck, Stemen
Senators Conley, Meyer, Wanzek

- 1 A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the agriculture commissioner for a county fair
2 resiliency grant program.

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

4 **SECTION 1. APPROPRIATION - AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER - COUNTY FAIR**

5 **RESILIENCY GRANT PROGRAM - ONE-TIME FUNDING.** There is appropriated out of any

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8 commissioner for the purpose of providing grants to county agriculture fair associations for the

9 planning, design, and construction of infrastructure projects, for the biennium beginning July 1,

10 2025, and ending June 30, 2027. The agriculture commissioner may not award more than

11 \$100,000 to a county agriculture fair association under this program. ~~A grant recipient must~~

12 ~~provide one dollar of matching funds from nonstate sources for each dollar provided by the~~

13 ~~agriculture commissioner.~~ The agriculture commissioner shall create guidelines to distribute the

14 grant funding, including the requirement for a recipient to provide one dollar of matching funds

15 from nonstate sources for up to two dollars of grant funding received. The guidelines may

16 provide for matching funds to be provided in the form of cash or in-kind contributions. The

17 appropriation in this section is considered a one-time funding item.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE OF AMENDMENT:**House Bill No. 1591 - Department of Agriculture - Senate Action**

	Base Budget	House Version	Senate Changes	Senate Version
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Total all funds	\$0	\$3,000,000	(\$1,500,000)	\$1,500,000
Less estimated income	0	0	0	0
General fund	\$0	\$3,000,000	(\$1,500,000)	\$1,500,000
FTE	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Department 602 - Department of Agriculture - Detail of Senate Changes

	Reduces Funding for Grants ¹	Total Senate Changes
County fair resiliency grants	(\$1,500,000)	(\$1,500,000)
Total all funds	(\$1,500,000)	(\$1,500,000)
Less estimated income	0	0
General fund	(\$1,500,000)	(\$1,500,000)
FTE	0.00	0.00

¹ One-time funding for county fair resiliency grants is reduced from \$3 million to \$1.5 million and matching funds requirements are adjusted.

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Appropriations Committee Harvest Room, State Capitol

HB 1591
4/1/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the agriculture commissioner for a county fair resiliency grant program.

9:44 a.m. Chairman Bekkedahl opened the hearing.

Members Present: Chairman Bekkedahl, Vice-Chairman Erbele, and Senators Burckhard, Cleary, Conley, Davison, Dever, Magrum, Mathern, Meyer, Schaible, Sickler, Sorvaag, Thomas, Wanzek.

Members Absent: Senator Dwyer.

Discussion Topics:

- Committee Action

9:44 a.m. Chairman Bekkedahl opened discussion regarding reconsideration of the bill.

9:44 a.m. Senator Erbele moved to reconsider their actions.

9:44 a.m. Senator Wanzek seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Brad Bekkedahl	Y
Senator Robert Erbele	Y
Senator Randy A. Burckhard	Y
Senator Sean Cleary	Y
Senator Cole Conley	Y
Senator Kyle Davison	Y
Senator Dick Dever	Y
Senator Michael Dwyer	A
Senator Jeffery J. Magrum	Y
Senator Tim Mathern	Y
Senator Scott Meyer	Y
Senator Donald Schaible	Y
Senator Jonathan Sickler	Y
Senator Ronald Sorvaag	Y
Senator Paul J. Thomas	Y
Senator Terry M. Wanzek	Y

Motion Passed 15-0-1.

9:45 a.m. Senator Wanzek moved to amend by changing the funding source from the general fund to SIIF fund.

9:45 a.m. Senator Erbele seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Brad Bekkedahl	Y
Senator Robert Erbele	Y
Senator Randy A. Burckhard	Y
Senator Sean Cleary	Y
Senator Cole Conley	Y
Senator Kyle Davison	Y
Senator Dick Dever	Y
Senator Michael Dwyer	A
Senator Jeffery J. Magrum	Y
Senator Tim Mathern	Y
Senator Scott Meyer	Y
Senator Donald Schaible	Y
Senator Jonathan Sickler	Y
Senator Ronald Sorvaag	Y
Senator Paul J. Thomas	Y
Senator Terry M. Wanzek	Y

Motion Passed 15-0-1.

9:46 a.m. Senator Wanzek moved a Do Pass as Amended.

9:46 a.m. Senator Erbele seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Brad Bekkedahl	Y
Senator Robert Erbele	Y
Senator Randy A. Burckhard	Y
Senator Sean Cleary	Y
Senator Cole Conley	Y
Senator Kyle Davison	Y
Senator Dick Dever	Y
Senator Michael Dwyer	A
Senator Jeffery J. Magrum	Y
Senator Tim Mathern	Y
Senator Scott Meyer	Y
Senator Donald Schaible	Y
Senator Jonathan Sickler	Y
Senator Ronald Sorvaag	Y
Senator Paul J. Thomas	Y
Senator Terry M. Wanzek	Y

Motion Passed 15-0-1.

Senator Erbele will carry the bill.

Senate Appropriations Committee

HB 1591

04/01/2025

Page 3

9:49 a.m. Chairman Bekkedahl adjourned the meeting.

Elizabeth Reiten, Committee Clerk

25.1256.03003
Title.05000
Fiscal No. 3

Prepared by the Legislative Council
staff for Senate Appropriations
Committee

April 1, 2025

Sixty-ninth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO FIRST ENGROSSMENT

CO
4/2/25
10f1

ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL NO. 1591

Introduced by

Representatives Ostlie, Grueneich, Jonas, Novak, Pyle, Satrom, Schreiber-Beck, Stemen

Senators Conley, Meyer, Wanzek

1 A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation to the agriculture commissioner for a county fair
2 resiliency grant program; and to declare an emergency.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:

4 SECTION 1. APPROPRIATION - STRATEGIC INVESTMENT AND IMPROVEMENTS
5 FUND - AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER - COUNTY FAIR RESILIENCY GRANT PROGRAM
6 - ONE-TIME FUNDING. There is appropriated out of any moneys in the ~~general fund~~ strategic
7 investment and improvements fund in the state treasury, not otherwise appropriated, the sum of
8 ~~\$3,000,000~~ \$1,500,000, or so much of the sum as may be necessary, to the agriculture
9 commissioner for the purpose of providing grants to county agriculture fair associations for the
10 planning, design, and construction of infrastructure projects, for the ~~biennium beginning July 1,~~
11 ~~2025~~ period beginning with the effective date of this Act, and ending June 30, 2027. The
12 agriculture commissioner may not award more than \$100,000 to a county agriculture fair
13 association under this program. ~~A grant recipient must provide one dollar of matching funds~~
14 ~~from nonstate sources for each dollar provided by the agriculture commissioner.~~ The agriculture
15 commissioner shall create guidelines to distribute the grant funding, including the requirement
16 for a recipient to provide one dollar of matching funds from nonstate sources for every
17 two dollars of grant funding received. The guidelines may provide for matching funds to be
18 provided in the form of cash or in-kind contributions. The funding in this section is considered a
19 one-time funding item.

20 SECTION 2. EMERGENCY. This Act is declared to be an emergency measure.

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
ENGROSSED HB 1591**

Appropriations Committee (Sen. Bekkedahl, Chairman) recommends **AMENDMENTS** ([25.1256.03003](#)) and when so amended, recommends **DO PASS** (15 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). Engrossed HB 1591 was placed on the Sixth order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.