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**Testimony of
Matt Perdue
North Dakota Farmers Union
Before the
House Appropriations Committee
February 1, 2021**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 1431. My name is Matt Perdue, and I am testifying on behalf of North Dakota Farmers Union's (NDFU) members.

NDFU has a neutral position on HB 1431. We believe that bonding represents a major opportunity to invest in critical infrastructure across our state. We, first and foremost, appreciate the committee's consideration of bonding to meet our state's needs.

We strongly support the inclusion of \$50 million for establishment of the Agricultural Products Development Center (APDC) in HB 1431. Public agricultural research is critical to the success of family farmers and ranchers. North Dakota State University's (NDSU) agricultural research is currently conducted in severely outdated facilities. NDSU's crop science and meats research, along with the Northern Crops Institute, should be housed in a facility that allows them to continue providing world-class research and promotion. The APDC will provide a solid return on investment.

NDFU also appreciates the \$50 million provided for the infrastructure revolving loan fund and \$70 million for the highway fund. However, our members hope a final bonding package will include additional funds for county and township infrastructure. Wet conditions, flooding and increased traffic have created significant stress on and, in some cases, overwhelmed rural roads and bridges. Disruptions during the busy planting and harvest seasons have proven costly for farmers and ranchers.

According to the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, North Dakota's county and township roads require a \$9.3 billion investment over the next 20 years. We appreciate the legislature's commitment to addressing those needs through Operation Prairie Dog during the 2019 session. However, the state's current fiscal challenges prevent the promise of Operation Prairie Dog from being fulfilled in the near term. Bonding offers an important opportunity to invest in county and township infrastructure.



We recognize the bonding discussion is ongoing and complex. We appreciate the committee's efforts to meet the state's growing needs in a challenging fiscal environment. NDFU believes county and township infrastructure and the APDC are important pieces to that puzzle.

Thank you for your consideration.

