

Mark Jirik
Director, Northern Crops Institute
Testimony of HB 1431

The Northern Crops Institute is an important driver of value for the state of North Dakota. A recent impact analysis of course participants from 2018 and 2019 showed that 51% had increased the volume of US commodities they purchased as a result of NCI courses – those commodities included soybeans, corn, wheat, and pulses providing increased demand to the farmers of North Dakota.

The same analysis showed that the technical services NCI provided in 2018 and 2019 to companies delivered more than a 16% increase in investment in the region from those companies. Over the last five years, NCI has worked on close to 350 projects with 130 entities ranging from government agencies and commodity groups to entrepreneurs and major global companies.

The current NCI building was built during a different era of agriculture, and didn't include space or capacity for many of the crops we produce today including corn, soybeans, and pulses. The current facility has no space to support technical service growth, new processes, or new program needs. In addition, the building design restricts what can be done to facilitate improvements and new processes.

The current NCI building was built with a view of food safety very different from what exists today and to bring the building up to current food safety standards would be very costly.

The founders of the Northern Crops Institute were visionary in believing in the power of translating the fundamental research conducted by universities could be transitioned into practical skill and knowledge with food science professionals to create value added processing and expanded markets for the crops grown in North Dakota. The Agricultural Product Development Center and Northern Crops Institute combined building will allow that work to expand to a greater scale and will eliminate the current restrictions caused by the current buildings.

The founders of the Northern Crops Institute believed that North Dakota's unique climate and growing conditions produce crops with exceptional qualities. NCI has continued to prove this in its work, and have spread that value message through its short courses and workshops to flour millers, food processors, feed millers, and livestock producers around the world. As a result of the work of NCI, 95% of short course attendees in 2018 and 2019 have greater confidence in the US supply chain and 99% have a better understanding of US crop quality.

HB 1431 would allow NCI to enhance the value it provides to North Dakota.