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**Testimony of  
Mark Watne  
North Dakota Farmers Union  
Before the  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
March 29, 2021**

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Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 1475. My name is Mark Watne, and I am the president of North Dakota Farmers Union (NDFU).

NDFU strongly supports HB 1475. We believe this legislation will play a key role in improving farmers' and ranchers' incomes, creating new jobs, and building a stronger state economy.

HB 1475 establishes a new Agriculture Diversification and Development Fund. Through a combination of loans, interest buydown and grants, the ADD Fund would provide unique financing packages that fit individual projects' needs. This program would promote the development and expansion of a wide variety of value-added projects including beef slaughter, feed mills, hemp processors, feedlots and more.

The ADD Fund would be overseen by a new Agriculture Diversification and Development Committee. This committee is modeled off the existing APUC, which has supported wealth creation and opportunities for farmers and ranchers since 1979. The ADD Fund builds upon APUC's success by creating a new fund to support construction of shovel-ready projects.

HB 1475 establishes four basic criteria to ensure ADD Fund dollars are awarded to projects that deliver the greatest benefit to all North Dakotans. To be eligible, projects must demonstrate financial feasibility, ability to enhance farmers' and ranchers' profits, jobs creation and economic growth.

NDFU appreciates the legislature's efforts to support economic diversification. One of the best ways to diversify our economy is to build upon our strong agricultural base. HB 1475 would do just that. This legislation would create new jobs and new opportunities across the state, while promoting a better future for the next generation of family farmers and ranchers.

We urge a do pass on HB 1475. I will stand for any questions

