

Turning Research into Action for North Dakotans

Testimony for the State Board of Agricultural Research and Education

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NDSU Extension delivers research-based solutions that strengthen **North Dakota's people, communities, and \$41 billion agricultural economy**. Our educators and specialists work in **all 53 counties**, supporting farmers, ranchers, families, communities and youth.

Request: Additional Operating Support

- **Goal:** Maintain the statewide network and system.
- **Need:** Operating dollars to keep staff **in the field, on farms, and in communities**.
- **Current Ratio:** 90% salaries / 10% operating (national norms: 70–80% / 20–30%).

Without adequate operating funds, staff cannot fully deliver programs, support volunteers, or respond quickly to emerging issues.

Agriculture & Natural Resources

Operating support ensures:

- Rapid field diagnostics that prevent **millions in crop losses**.
- Real-time decision tools protecting **\$5B+** in cereal crop value.
- Herbicide-resistance mapping that safeguards up to **\$8B** across 38.5M acres.
- Crop schools, livestock workshops, pesticide trainings, and field days.

Without support, Agricultural profitability declines; potential savings are lost.

4-H Youth Development

Serving **40,000 youth & 2,000 volunteers** annually with operating funds supporting:

- Volunteer screening and youth safety.
- Camps, contests, leadership trainings, and STEM programs.
- County staff to sustain local programs.

Research indicates that 4-H youth are more civic-minded, STEM-focused, and tend to make healthier choices.

Family & Community Wellness

Extension FCW programs generate measurable returns:

Program	Return on Investment
Community Leadership	\$7 per \$1 invested
Aging-in-Community	\$308 per \$1 in Medicaid savings
Diabetes Prevention	\$8,000 saved per participant annually

Without support, prevention programs shrink, volunteer networks weaken, and communities lose their capacity to respond.

Systemwide Impacts

Reduced operating funds lead to:

- Less staff travel & program delivery
- Outdated digital tools & technology
- Weakened onboarding and training
- Slower research collaborations
- Delayed response to emerging issues

Erosion is gradual but real, limiting the return on decades of state investment.

Investing in Operating Support Restores:

- Sustainable **80–85% personnel / 15–20% operating** balance
- Program delivery and services in all 53 counties
- Modern digital and AI-based tools
- Consistent 4-H safety & program quality
- High-return agriculture and community programs
- Protection of both Extension outreach & applied research

Operating support helps preserve the reach and effectiveness of NDSU Extension.

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