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VP Agricultural Affairs

Box 411

Finley, ND 58230

Keith Peltier, SBARE Chair
NDSU Dept 7520
PO Box 6050
Fargo, ND 58108-6050

Dear Mr. Peltier:

I understand that the NDSU Extension Service and State Legislature are considering combining several county Extension offices in order to reduce financial burdens. Please help the determining board see that this is not in the best interest of the rural North Dakota people. I have always considered the local county Extension Office as an 'arm of the university'. I believe that this is how it was set up in the land-grant system years ago – those early leaders had the foresight to bring education and services to the rural areas of North Dakota.

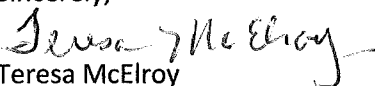
Our rural areas are already overlooked by many state agencies; for example, the drivers license testing which used to be held in each county one a day a month (limited time but vital) was eliminated years ago. Now our residents must travel to larger cities taking one-half to a full day just to renew licenses.

Our small rural schools are being forced to consolidate due to low student numbers. We have seen our children on bus rides longer than should be. Also, the students seem to lose identity and enthusiasm with their combined schools. I can easily see this happening with the 4-H, Homemakers, and other programs. I can foresee 4-H leaders needing to travel over fifty miles to attend council meetings in the neighboring county. These are volunteers; their time is valuable and this would be unfair to them.

I do not know the solutions for our rural North Dakota population deficient but combining offices is not conducive to providing services for those of us that do live and work in rural North Dakota. The people of North Dakota enjoy the personal relationships with Extension staff. They provide researched knowledge. Maybe reducing spending budgets in all county offices and administration would be a help. Large conferences and travel are costly for all levels of Extension, so for a limited time, especially with the technology that we have access to, maybe you need to reevaluate the needs of the whole state in this area.

Thank you for considering the needs of rural North Dakota in this matter.

Sincerely,


Teresa McElroy