I am writing this testimony in regards to the Sheridan County Extension office. I have lived in this county all of my life and have benefitted greatly by our county extension office. Through the years our local extension office has provided us with Pesticide certification, Agriculture information programs, Sheridan crop and Livestock Improvement Association, which I am currently the president and work with Nicole as secretary. She informs us of new programs and activities that are currently available to our county. She also comes to our Sheridan county soil conservation meetings, to inform us on programs, working closely with NRCS. My wife has taken advantage in other education programs such as Annie's project, Design your Succession Plan, and Women in Ag events along with being a resource to gardening questions.

We have been a 4-H family since our son was old enough to be a clover bud. We have been leaders and judges at county Achievement Days. We have seen first hand how important local 4-H is. Through the active leaders and county agents our son has learned the skills to be a better promoter of family, health, agriculture and learned the life skills to be a success in todays world. All of these things are do to the hard working people at our local county extension office.

Now we have heard that this office has been under a possible cut, or that we may have to us share agents with a larger county. This would be a very sad and disturbing thought. I know we are a small county but I do believe we demonstrate skills that in part are from having a strong extension program. We have many young people that are making a living in the agriculture field, and because of the strong agriculture background are successful. Small rural counties in North Dakota need and utilize their extension services more than larger counties closer to large metropolitan areas. They are a source of information and knowledge and if they don't know the answers they are willing to find out the answers for us. Paying a larger share of the agents salary is certainly not fair to us small counties either, we have a small budget as it is. Maybe the answer is to cut back on the many agents that some large counties have so we can keep the one we have.

I am hoping that you hear our voice and understand how important our agent and extension office is to us. We need to keep the extension office in our county.

Thank you.

Kevin Bender