

Dear State Board of Agricultural Research and Education,

My name is Ben Gullicks from rural Galesburg, ND. I am a Steele county resident of 43 years, I am currently a farmer as well as a Salesperson for Agriculture machinery. As a youth, I was in the 4H Club Handy Helpers, learning multiple projects along with competing in the Steele County 4H Achievement Days. I am currently a 4H leader for the Tri-County Trailblazers 4H club and also an instructor for the Steele/Trall 4H Archery club.

I am writing this letter to inform the SBARE board of my concerns of the recent budget cuts to the NDSU Extension program from the ND Legislature. I am very concerned about the future of the Extension program in Steele County, ND. The proposal of eliminating our current NDSU Extension Agent Angie Johnson would be very devastating to our county, and communities within the county along with the surrounding counties and communities. The thought of losing our Agent impacts so many people from our youth, our farmers, our local schools and all residents of Steele County that Angie serves on a daily basis.

The recommended change in the proposal of 2000 residents per county or less is not a representation of what our agent serves. According to the 2015 census number, Steele County has 1956 residents. Angie and her staff do not only serve these 1956 residents but they also reach out to the neighboring counties, towns and schools that are not in the county. The staff provides many learning activities within the schools in both Steele County and Cass County thru the Ag in the Classroom program along with many other in school programs. Angie has been in the Finley Sharon School and Page Elementary School (Cass County) with animals such as piglets and lambs teaching the students about the benefits and importance of livestock. Without her teaching these students they would not have the opportunity to get hands on experience with these animals and what is involved with taking care of the animals. More important the fact these children are learning where there food comes from, and what it takes to produce healthy food. How can we put a value on that? Agriculture is the largest industry in the state of ND, if we take away the opportunity to educate the youth about agriculture it would be devastating.

The current Steele county 4H membership is at 79 youth for the 2017-2018 year, an increase from last year's enrollment of 26 youth. That is an astonishing increase of 53 youth. These 79 members come from three different counties Steele, Traill, and Cass which brings up the point of Steele Counties population of 1956 and why it should be reconsidered and not only look at the population number but the other communities that Angie serves as well. I would say that Angie's most passionate program that she is involved with is the 4H program. She treats every one of these 4H's as if they were her own child. Always willing to help them in any way she can by attending club meetings, helping with static projects, and assisting with the livestock projects. She has started a spring livestock auction sale/seminar. This allows families to learn about livestock along with the chance to purchase lambs, pigs, and goats for the upcoming years projects. I have personally witnessed the smiles on children's faces when they have purchased an animal, along with the tears from children when they did not get the animal they were hoping for because they were out bid by some else. These are the memories that these children will remember for a lifetime.

The other program the Angie has started for the youth is the Steele/Traill 4H Archery program. The first year was a complete success. We have 60 youth enrolled in the program, they come from Steele, Traill, and Cass County, so again our Steele County boundaries/population are not represented in the proposed cuts. This program reaches out to so many youth. The first year our archers competed in regional and state matches, taking many awards home from these matches. Our junior division took 1<sup>st</sup> place in the state match along with many individual awards throughout the year.

As you can see Angie's involvement with the youth is invaluable. She is the most genuine and passionate person I know about the 4H Extension program. To lose our Agent in Steele County would be such a great loss. The youth of our state are the future of Agriculture. We need to do everything we can in order to keep them educated and involved in these programs to continue to make our great state of North Dakota a leader in the Agriculture sector for years to come.

Steele County farmers would also suffer a huge loss if we were to lose our agent. They rely on our local agent to answer question about anything from weeds, pest, crops, and livestock to food preservation. Angie works with the Steele County Weed Board to take care of noxious weeds in the county and keep them under control, does pesticide training/recertification, monitors two NDAWN stations in the county, and helps producers with Farm Bill info, the list goes on and on. We currently have a great resource in Steele County having a fulltime Agent. Along with information Angie can provide from the research she does along with services from NDSU Extension is very valuable to our local Ag producers.

Please think about the many services that are provided, and the people that are served by our Steele County Extension agent and consider the negative effects that would be felt by the youth/ residents of Steele County and the surrounding counties if we were to lose our agent.

Sincerely,

Concerned Citizen , 4H Leader, & Farmer

Ben Gullicks

931 142 Ave Se

Galesburg, ND 58035

7013712165