

February 3, 2025

agInnovation North Central Office
c/o Chris Hamilton
chamilton@wisc.edu

RE: Letter of Support for North Central Development Committee Proposal – Place, People, and Promotion:
Improving Youth Behavioral Health and Resilience in Context

Dear agNC Review Committee:

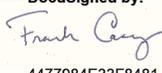
On behalf of the North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station (NDAES), I am writing to express our strong support for the proposed North Central Development Committee (NCDC) titled “Place, People, and Promotion: Improving Youth Behavioral Health and Resilience in Context.” This proposal addresses a critical and growing concern for rural communities across our region, and we are pleased to support its development.

Rural adolescents face disproportionately high rates of mental health challenges, substance use, and suicidality, compounded by persistent shortages of behavioral health professionals in our communities. North Dakota is not immune to these challenges. This NCDC’s focus on understanding contextual factors that shape youth behavioral health and developing place-based, positive youth development strategies aligns directly with the needs of the families and communities we serve.

The proposal demonstrates clear alignment with agInnovation North Central Grand Challenges, particularly Grand Challenge 7 (Strengthening Individual, Family, and Community Development and Resilience) and Grand Challenge 5 (Improving Human Health, Nutrition, and Wellness). This work also supports Hatch Act priorities related to improving rural life and family resilience, and addresses NIFA science priorities in Youth Development Science and Family and Consumer Sciences.

The proposed committee brings together an impressive group of researchers and Extension specialists from across the North Central region and beyond. NDSU supports the participation in this effort through Dr. Christi McGeorge, Professor of Human Development and Family Science, who brings significant expertise in family therapy and resilience research. The multistate collaborative approach will enable the sharing of surveillance data, best practices, and the development of interventions that can be adapted to diverse rural contexts.

Sincerely,

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Frank Casey, Ph.D.

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