

1 Good morning Chairman Thomas and members of the Ag Committee. I am Deb Egeland, lobbyist for I-
2 BAND, Independent Beef Association of ND. I'm here to support HB 1471, the creation of a Food
3 Insecurity Task Force. You might think this is only about homeless people. It is so much more.

4 I worked in DPI for 25 years. Last school year 21/22 was the most difficult year. 100 school districts lost
5 their food distributor, 50 lost their milk distributor and the DPI School Food Distribution manager
6 decided not to order 3 trucks of commodity ground beef. Schools were scrambling, many were forced
7 to order from gas station suppliers that did not carry fresh meat or produce. The Governor's Office even
8 stepped in to offer DOT trucks to help deliver food.

9 One good thing that came out of this was Jeremy Maher, a rancher, called about the beef shortage and
10 asked if local ranchers could sell or donate beef to schools. We started a "Beef to School" pilot in
11 January and had 78 districts purchasing local beef by May. I also found 2 retired milkmen to help out
12 until we could find milk suppliers for the 50 abandoned school districts.

13 This was all very random, there was no deciding whose job is this, whose fault is this. WE just got it
14 done. I shudder to think what if I hadn't returned Jeremy's call? What if I said, "That's not my job?"

15 This state produces so much food, however, there is no coordinated effort to make sure the food is
16 distributed where/when it is needed. We need an organized Food Insecurity Task Force with assigned
17 partners that can jump into action as needed.

18 USDA put out grants for local foods to schools and to non-school entities last spring. Only state agencies
19 could apply. I knew this would be good for food pantries and for ND producers. I contacted Melissa
20 Sobolik and connected her with Kara Haff from the ND Ag Department to see what products could be
21 purchased. Melissa told me one of the most requested products was ground beef. I don't think anyone
22 in Ag or DPI would have known that if we did not have that random conversation, which again was not
23 my job, I just did it and Great Plains received \$413,000 to purchase North Dakota products.

24 We need organized communication between the agencies working on feeding the people of North
25 Dakota.

26 I-BAND will be serving fresh beef in the Great Hall on February 24. Please come and enjoy!

27 Thank you for listening. I would be happy to answer any questions.