

Members of the House Agriculture Committee,

As it is currently written, I urge a DO NOT pass on SB 2174. As Stutsman County resident and natural resource professional with science background, I have two major concerns with the bill:

1. There was no public health representation on the interim Model Zoning Task Force that proposed the Odor Footprint Tool; commodity interests were heavily weighted, and therefore I do not believe the outcome of that committee was as well-rounded as the residents of North Dakota deserve. I value agriculture and its role in our state's heritage and economy, which is why I would invite a responsible path forward that truly honors our collective commitment to agriculture in our state- one in which farmers, ranchers, and value-added entities are members of our rural communities, and stewards of the land and resources. Some of my favorite things about living here are the wide open space, clean water, and air. Putting decisions around a how densely we pack these industrial-scale animal feeding operations across our landscape in the hands of tool that was developed with little public health professionals (i.e., doctors, scientists) is irresponsible. I think there are some foundations of a decision-support mechanism in the tool, but they need to be built out and more comprehensive; it should not just be about smell, it should take into account potential toxins in the air, and better draw from the field of public health research (i.e., disease, air quality).

2. The hyper focus on odor seems to neglect other impacts of these massive facilities. I am disappointed to not see any consideration or criteria in the Model Zoning Task Force around flooding considerations (i.e., as they relate to potential runoff from manure storage or nearby field application that would come with most of these facilities) or proximity to recreational and drinking water supplies. Decisions and things like this take time and intention, and I know most folks would not want another "study", but what can this committee do to integrate these considerations into zoning guidance?

To my knowledge, the Model Zoning Task Force was created to "simplify" zoning guidelines to expand the animal agricultural segment of our economy. I think when it comes to our rural communities' health, air, and water, we deserve to take our time and be a little less rash in our pursuit of this simplicity, the immediate effect of which is mostly to cater to out-of-state corporate interests. Proponents of this bill say ND has "fallen behind" other states when it comes to animal ag, but in that comparison forget to look to the lessons other states (ID, NE) have learned about the harm of irresponsibly pushing through these massive operations without appropriate mechanisms, staff, and political will in place for monitoring water, air, and human health quality.

Sincerely,
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