

North Dakota Stockmen's Association

Testimony to the House Agriculture Committee on HB 1135

Feb. 3, 2023

Good morning, Chairman Thomas and members of the House Agriculture Committee. My name is Julie Ellingson and I represent the North Dakota Stockmen's Association, a 93-year-old beef cattle trade organization comprised of more than 3,100 cattle-ranching members.

The North Dakota Stockmen's Association supports HB 1135, which would prohibit foreign governments from purchasing, acquiring, leasing or holding any interest in agricultural land in the state moving forward. (This bill is our favorite amongst the trio of foreign ownership bills you will be hearing this morning. It is the cleanest-cut of the options and does not have the same potential to possibly impact dual-citizens who farm and ranch near the border, as just one example.)

Our organization has long-standing policy on land ownership, opposing all state, federal or non-profit tax-exempt organization's ownership of agricultural lands. We can extend that sentiment to foreign ownership as well. Not only is this a philosophical tenet of our group, but a potential matter of national security.

There are countries that are threats to American democracy, and the state should not allow people to sell our farmland to them. Instead, we should protect our farmland and food supply chain from these entities. HB 1135 helps ensure that.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, China, as one example, has increased its American agricultural land holdings more than tenfold in the last decade and spent as much as \$2 billion in American agricultural land ownership at the beginning of 2020.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.