

Opposition to HB 1371

Chairman Johnson and members of the House Agriculture Committee,

Please oppose HB 1371. I humbly echo the valid points brought by many others who oppose this bill; HB 1371 presents an unnecessary risk to small and mid-size producers and threatens the economic livelihood and public health of rural communities at large.

I am not a farmer, I come from a family of teachers and accountants. I understand the need for capital investment and innovative solutions to support farm business and economic livelihood. But the potential benefit of investment via the exemptions codified in HB 1371 do not outweigh the risks to rural communities.

Just less than a decade ago, voters made it clear North Dakotans oppose exemptions for animal operations in the anti-corporate farming law. Today, we can see past the shallow promises behind HB 1371. Rather than ushering in the next generation of agriculture, these exemptions set us up to repeat recent history and ignore lessons from other midwest states, where large-scale hog and dairy operations have pushed out smaller farms and have out-paced any safeguards for public health and water quality.

Diversified and value-added agriculture should be a part of a prosperous North Dakota, but paving the path forward should be a thoughtful process, rather than a hasty exemption poised to allow corporate takeover of land and communities.

As a resident, I value how historic protections have allowed small and mid-size producers to continue as a pillar of North Dakota's heritage. As a consumer, I seek regional diversified food and other agriculture-based products that don't threaten rural livelihood. As a neighbor, I trust the groups of producers and concerned rural constituents who urge you to uphold, not decrease the protections of the anti-corporate farming sections of the North Dakota Century Code. Please truly listen. Please oppose HB 1371.

Thank you for your consideration.

Olivia Johnson
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Resident and Dakota Resource Council Member