



Contact:
Matt Perdue, Lobbyist
mperdue@ndfu.org | 701.641.3303

**Testimony of
Shelly Ziesch
North Dakota Farmers Union
Before the
House Agriculture Committee
January 26, 2023**

Chairman Thomas and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 1436. My name is Shelly Ziesch, I am a 4th generation rancher from Pettibone, ND. My family runs 600 cow/calf pairs. We also raise corn, soybeans, wheat, oats and alfalfa. I am a member of the North Dakota Farmers Union Board of Directors, representing District 6, which stretches from Wells County to Dickey County. I am here today on behalf of NDFU.

NDFU supports HB 1436, which establishes an election process for the North Dakota Beef Commission. Under current law, the governor appoints every member of the beef commission. Six of those nine appointments are made from nominations by specific groups. This process is unusual for checkoff board elections. Of the 10 commodity councils in North Dakota, eight have elected boards.

Research and promotion is important to the success of farmers and ranchers. That is why we believe it is important that all participating producers have equal opportunity to serve on the checkoff board. We also believe that all producers should have the opportunity to vote for their representatives on the commission. In addition to the beef checkoff, my family pays into the corn, soybean and wheat checkoffs. These other checkoffs are highly successful and are proof that an election process works.

HB 1436 also establishes a referendum process for the state beef checkoff. Currently, North Dakota producers pay two dollars per head into the beef checkoff. The first dollar goes to the Cattlemen's Beef Board, the national checkoff group. The second dollar goes to the North Dakota Beef Commission. The national beef checkoff currently has a referendum process. The referendum process included in HB 1436 requires a more stringent process for the state checkoff. It requires at least 15 percent of producers to sign the petition versus the national 10 percent requirement. HB 1436 also requires geographic diversity in who signs the petition. Finally, HB 1436 allows for an upward adjustment in the value of the assessment, while the national referendum process only allows suspension or termination of the checkoff.

NDFU recognizes this is a contentious issue. We are committed to working with all stakeholders to make any improvements necessary to provide an effective and efficient election process.

We respectfully request a "Do Pass" recommendation on HB 1436. I will stand for any questions.