



NORTH DAKOTA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

**TESTIMONY OF JOHN BRADLEY
NORTH DAKOTA WILDLIFE FEDERATION
HOUSE BILL 1151
HOUSE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCE
COMMITTEE
JANUARY 20, 2023**

Chairman Porter and members of the House Energy and Natural Resource Committee:

For the record, I am John Bradley, Executive Director of the North Dakota Wildlife Federation (NDWF). I'm here today representing our 1,500 members in 15 affiliated wildlife and sportsmen's clubs across North Dakota that make up the North Dakota Wildlife Federation.

NDWF opposes HB 1151. This is not simply my opinion - this is an organization that is built on our grassroots. Our members and affiliate bring ideas forward through a delegate and resolution process, and just like you are elected to represent your districts, they represent their clubs and their members throughout the state. Earlier this month they supported via our resolution process that, and I quote:

“Therefore, be it resolved that the North Dakota Wildlife Federation supports the North Dakota Game and Fish Chronic Wasting Disease and Surveillance Plan 2023 – 2027 and the proposed actions and strategies to manage and restrict the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease.”

HB 1151 would severely undermine the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's (NDG&F) authority and ability to manage deer and deer hunting with the best-available science. Specifically, the bill removes the authority from NDG&F to issue rules or adopt a policy or practice prohibiting the baiting of deer for lawful hunting. The one-line bill, and the removal of management authority from NDG&F, is a direct attempt to undermine chronic wasting disease (CWD) management efforts in the state and would have a detrimental impact on managing other diseases as well.

The practice of baiting and its role in deer management has grown in terms of controversy and complexity in the last decade. The NDWF acknowledges the available scientific data surrounding this issue is incomplete, science often is. Science is a theory backed by data, experiments, and tested repeatedly. Our deer managers are working hard to implement methods and tactics to mitigate the spread of diseases, including CWD. The science tells us that artificial baiting increases unnatural, man-made density around a single food source and therefore increases the potential for direct and indirect contact among individuals. We understand that natural congregation occurs in our deer herds, but we shouldn't remove what we as humans can



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control from our management toolbox. When it comes to CWD, we are buying our future selves time to figure this disease out and discover new ways to reduce and hopefully eliminate CWD from the landscape. Outside of CWD, there are 11 other deer diseases that are thought to be spread by direct contact, including bovine tuberculosis (TB), some of these diseases, left unchecked, can severely impact our livestock producers as well.

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) sites that unnatural concentration of cervids facilitates CWD transmission and establishment if CWD prions are present. AFWA, (which is made up from every state game and fish agency, as well as the National Rifle association, National Shooting Sports Foundation, Boone and Crockett Club, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Mule Deer Foundation, National Wildlife Federation, Wild Sheep Foundation) lists the prohibition of baiting or feeding wild deer as a best management practice for the prevention of CWD introduction and establishment. Imagine removing a ratchet from a mechanic's toolbox, and still expecting them to be able to fix your vehicle. HB 1151 intentionally removes this management practice (tool) from the authority of NDG&F.

Furthermore, this bill would also have a negative impact on hunting opportunities for sportsmen and women. Healthy wildlife populations are essential to the sustainability of hunting opportunities, and the spread of diseases such as CWD and TB can have a significant impact on these opportunities. By limiting the ability of the department to protect wildlife populations from disease, HB 1151 would also limit the opportunities for deer hunting in the long run.

Wildlife management decisions, and especially disease management decisions, should remain in the hands of professional wildlife managers – not lawmakers. HB 1151 would result in a massive setback for disease and deer management in North Dakota. We urge a Do Not Pass on HB 1151.