

February 3, 2023

Testimony in Support of HB 1538

North Dakota House Energy and Natural Resources Committee

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

I am Amy Krueger, Executive Director of the Williston Convention and Visitor Bureau.

One of the main attractions to our area in North West North Dakota is the Outdoors, including hunting and fishing. This beautiful asset not only is intriguing and inspiring to our visitors coming into our area but our workforce and population adding to our Quality of Life. Fishing Tournaments are one of those draws. In 2020 through an Administrative Rules Process the \$5,000 cap of the 10% tournament conservation fee was removed. This made our locally run Lewis and Clark Big 10 tournament conservation fee jump from \$5,000 to \$10,000. Taking away from the payout of prizes and making this tournament less attractive to fish. While my office has stepped up and sponsored the increase in conservation fee the last two years as this tournament is important for us to retain our end of the lake, unfortunately we are not able to sustain this commitment long term. This tournament has attracted many attendees traveling more than 120 miles to get here, resulting in hotel nights, gas, food, bait and tackle purchases at local establishments, all increasing our economic impact and reach. While Williston has not had the privilege of hosting some of the Nationally Ranked Tournaments, we have benefited from them. When Garrison has hosted some of these tournaments my communities have still benefited from these economic impacts as teams were fishing our end of the lake. I would like to note that these visitors are not just staying in our area for the night or two of the tournaments, but many of them can be found in the area for a week or more pre-fishing and learning the area, some of them coming to visit several times prior to the tournament.

While I would have liked to see more of a compromise reached in our efforts of negotiation, as I do believe the conservation fee has done a lot of good adding much needed improvements to our infrastructure: including vault toilets, improvements to access points, and fish cleaning stations. I am not convinced that the burden of those fees and needs should lie only on the shoulders of tournament anglers but should be assessed to all who enjoy the amenities. This bill would allow us to host larger tournaments and for these reasons I would ask you to support HB 1538.

Sincerely,


Amy Krueger, Executive Director