



North Dakota Native Vote
919 S. 7th St., Suite 603
Bismarck, North Dakota 58504
1-888-425-1483
[*info@ndnativevote.org*](mailto:info@ndnativevote.org)

Statement of Sharnell Seaboy regarding HB 1371
Field Organizer at North Dakota Native Vote
March 24, 2023
Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee

Chairman and members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee, my name is Sharnell Seaboy. I am an enrolled citizen of the Mni Wakan Oyate (Spirit Lake Nation) and I am a Field Organizer at North Dakota Native Vote. We are here in opposition of HB 1371.

North Dakota Native Vote is a non-partisan grassroots organization. Our mission is to create and affect policy to promote equitable representation for the Native people of North Dakota.

The First Engrossment of HB 1371 raises many concerns about how passing this bill could damage North Dakota's economy and people. A major concern for North Dakota Native Vote is if the legislation would abandon control of the state's fee patent lands to foreign or domestic corporations for purchase. If so, these corporate purchases would lead to relinquishing an irreplaceable asset and destroying the livelihoods of thousands of North Dakotans whose lands have been protected for over a century.

As others have testified, the First Engrossment version of the bill, to be effective, would require additional staff and a strong willingness of officials to enforce the anti-corporate farming law. Is the Legislature willing to fund the necessary personnel increase to make sure the regulations in this bill are enforced? This is critically important because left on its own the 160 acre per person rule would provide an easy place for corporations to create and hide an infinite number of corporations to obtain fee patents. Even with stronger enforcement efforts than we have now, this law could enable circumventing regulations and protections.

North Dakotans are well aware that corporate farms in other parts of the country have brought negative impacts to rural communities. In fact, Dr. Curtis Stofferahn, a University of North Dakota Rural Sociologist, in a review of research found corporate, industrialized operations were less likely to sustain middle class communities.

In 2016, a statewide vote rejected a weakening of the corporate farm law with 76% of the vote. This current attempt to again circumvent the will of voters is a direct action aimed at harming many citizens of North Dakota to benefit a few.

Because of the many negative consequences from increased corporatization of our agriculture, North Dakota Native Vote urges the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee to recommend Do Not Pass on HB 1371.