

Testimony HB1437

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Testimony in Opposition for HB 1437

To the Honorable Chairman and the members of the Committee We submit these remarks on behalf of DRC.

Mr Chairman,

We have reviewed the texts of the amendments to this bill and we are still in opposition of HB1437 because of support for CAFOs and the fact that there is a confidentiality and secrecy clause in the bill. Everything else for development of value-added agriculture companies and processing plants we support but to this day we have yet to see any organization come into a township or county to write zoning laws that has ever made environmental or local control better in the area. The real reason for this is to try and deregulate things for the benefit of moneyed interest and to set up shop without community involvement. This is a top down approach that we can't endorse and it has caused multiple problems in our communities across North Dakota.

Our philosophy is that economic development for communities is an important part of community building, but it is not the only facet of what makes a good community. The environment, tourism, and the quality of life for the people that live there also need to be considered. Economic development for the sake of economic development historically sides with business and never with the communities that businesses will hurt, which is why it is especially important for townships and counties to have local control and autonomy.

Secrecy Issues:

I can tell you first hand about my experiences with a project that was kept secret in Casselton North Dakota. For several months our community members, our legislative team, and even our city council members had no knowledge of this project. The NDSP Project would've been far better received if the community was informed earlier. Perhaps even with some better communication there would've been less opposition to the project. In Howes township and Devils Lake two CAFOs met opposition because the owners were not upfront and honest with the community. When Fufeng was being negotiated the US Air Force stated they did not know about the project for months if not over a year. We want good neighbors in our community and this bill will not encourage that type of behavior. If you want to know the root cause of many of these projects that are opposed in North Dakota, keeping them secret is one of the top reasons people oppose them.

The Problem with CAFOs:

Adding Confined Agriculture Farming Operations (CAFOs) to this list is problematic because of the way North Dakota law is written. North Dakota law prohibits any township from asking a company that comes to their community to regulate their air or water pollution that comes from their business. It prohibits a township from making a company pay for the roads that their farm would damage. It also prohibits getting paid any money from the company in licensing fees that could be used by the community. Animal agriculture can be done responsibly but this law is going to be more asking townships and counties to give up their autonomy 8,000 dollars.

We urge you to vote DO NOT PASS unless you remove confined animal agriculture from the list of approved projects and strip the confidentiality requirement from the bill.