

My name is Kelly Gustafson.

I have lived in Aneta ND my whole life; I have been in the beekeeping industry in North Dakota since 2000.

My career has been working full time for a large commercial beekeeper, 9,000-10,000 hives, also running 500+ hives of my own on the side for the last 2 years. I have personally handled beekeeping operations all over the entire east side of North Dakota and also the south west region.

My testimony is in OPPOSITION of the beekeeping bill SB-2134 requiring beekeepers to maintain a 1/4 mile distance from the roads.

Over the last 20+ years, the availability of locations to place bees has been increasingly more difficult every year. Some issues we run into are CRP coming out, old farmsteads being knocked down and farmed, and the huge influx of out of state beekeepers encroaching onto pre-existing bee yards. When we are able to gain a bee location, usually the farmer dictates which specific spot they would like the bees placed. With North Dakota being so rural, we rarely have any issues with land owners and the bees since we gain permission, they are well informed in what our intent is on their property, in the location they specify.

I handle over 100 bee locations, and the proposed 1/4 mile from the road would most likely not allow us to use over 90% of them. Approaches, fences, terrain limitations, sloughs, the ability to enter and exit with out trucks are just a few restrictive factors we need to take in consideration when searching for yards.

Many times, the available bee locations are not farmed, due to it being too wet but right in the approach is suitable for our needs. So for forcing beekeepers to venture a 1/4 mile out into these sections of land will not be feasible for our trucks needed for doing our jobs correctly and timely. The more distance we have to drive CRP raises the likeliness of us getting stuck, which causes loss of time and can be much more destructive to the ground for ruts left from trucks and possibly requiring tractors for extraction. Moving the hives farther back also may encroach on occupied farmsteads, posing more issues with land owners and families by having them too close to the house.

Another issue with being that far off the road is taking into consideration the other half of the section. Sometimes we either occupy both ends of a mile section, or another beekeeper has a registered yard. For both of us to be 1/4 mile closer to each other can cause even more overlap in foraging bees, and also instigate the hives to rob and fight each other. This has large negative affects due to beehive harm and loss of honey.

"Simply" moving the bees back from the road doesn't guarantee bees won't be flying over them as they will cover over a mile in search of honey sources, so it will not solve the dirty windshield problem that people complain about. If the concern is for repaving highways and maintenance is needed where the bees pose an issue, given a proper notice and timeframe, most beekeepers would move the hives in a specific circumstance. With every bee yard registered online through the state and the requirements for signs in each location, finding out whose bees they are and

contacting is very easy for concerns about specific locations.

Beekeepers endure many hurdles we have to overcome on a daily basis. Financial burdens, hive losses due to diseases, mites, loss of viable food sources, labor, and the availability for bee locations already to name a few. Requiring us to reevaluate every spot would be detrimental financially and time. Hopefully the agricultural benefits and the revenue generated in the state from beekeeping comes into consideration that we are just out here making a living in our own way so adding more restrictions, like this bill would be unjust and a major hinderance. While on paper, this solution probably sounds easy and logical but for these reasons above are why I am extremely opposed to this unnecessary bill.

Thank you for your time reading my testimony and consideration.

Kelly Gustafson
Aneta, ND