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**Testimony of Samantha Brunner
State Apiary Inspector
Senate Bill 2134
Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee
Fort Union Room
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Chairman Luick and members of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I am Samantha Brunner, State Apiary Inspector for the North Dakota Department of Agriculture (NDDA) here representing Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring. I am here today to provide information on the beekeeping industry in North Dakota in relation to Senate Bill 2134.

The NDDA oversees beekeeping in the state through licensing and registration of beekeepers and apiary (hive) locations. In 2022 there were 333 licensed beekeepers in the state managing 809,321 honey bee colonies. Those bees are placed on 20,378 registered locations. Beekeeping in North Dakota has grown a lot over the past several decades. Just for reference in 2013 there were 482,660 honey bee colonies in the state. Hobby beekeepers, those with fewer than 50 colonies is the sector that has grown the most, from 37 in 2013 to 128 licensed in 2022. During this same time the number of commercial beekeepers, with 501 or more colonies, has only grown by 34.

North Dakota is the number 1 honey producing state in the nation, according to NASS producing over 28 million pounds in 2021. North Dakota has held this title since 2004, while the other rankings vary year to year, we typically produce about twice as much honey as the state ranked second in honey production, in 2021 it was South Dakota with just over 12 million pounds. If this bill were to pass, approximately 94% of the registered locations would be illegal. This comes out to over 19,000 locations. If we look at just the state and federal highways we drop that number down to about 9% of the locations. Regardless of which roads you look at for

setting hives back from there are structures, that cannot be moved that will be impacted. The Roosevelt Zoo in Minot and the Dakota Zoo in Bismarck both have honey bee colonies that would become illegal. Most beekeepers have honey houses that are located along these roads, and where they keep bees for various points of the summer, they would also be illegal. Another growing sector of the industry is indoor wintering of honey bees. This has many proven benefits including healthier, stronger hives going into almond pollination. These buildings cost millions to build, currently the state has 3 and we expect more to come. The current buildings would be illegal if this bill were passed. Honey houses tend to serve many purposes for beekeepers, in addition to extracting honey some times beekeepers need to pull trucks of bees into the building and hold them for a period of time before dispatching the bees to their locations. Bees are often staged in the yard of the honey house in the spring and in the fall when moving bees around. These uses would also become illegal unless exemptions are made.

I mentioned our growing number of hobby beekeepers in the state, these people often keep the bees right in their backyards. The passing of this bill would nearly eliminate this growing sector of the industry. We also have many commercial beekeepers that are also landowners in the state, some purchasing land specifically to keep bees, some of these locations fall entirely within $\frac{1}{4}$ from these roads.

Currently in our department we have 4 full time employees that give apiary their priority in the summer, this isn't their only responsibility, but it is a majority of their time in the active summer months. We also hire 2 summer seasonal employees that again focus on honey bees but do also assist with other department tasks. We utilize other staff in the plant industries division for assistance as needed, maybe to follow up on a complaint that is near their destination or to report locations while they travel the state for other reasons. We also task field staff from other divisions to assist in reporting hive locations while out on their regular travels. This bill would require a large increase in the number of staff to assist with enforcing the setback and confiscating hives.

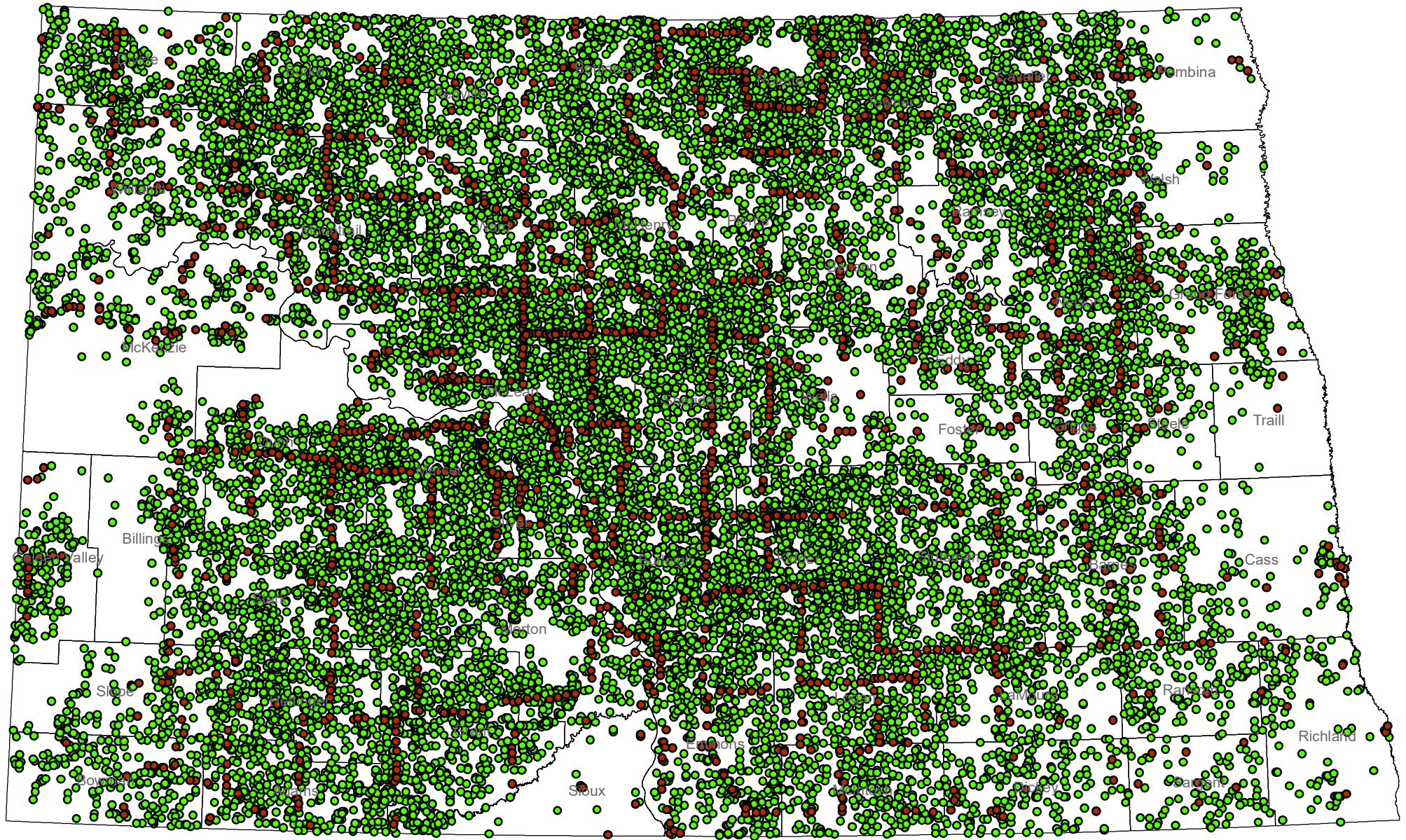
Even if we were provided with the staff needed to enforce this law, we would need to either purchase the equipment and train staff how to operate it or we would need to contract with other beekeepers to confiscate the hives. This would mean going through a procurement process to

establish beekeepers to cover various regions across the state. This would cause a lot of hostility among beekeepers and increase already high tensions due to the density of bees in the state. In addition to the factors, I have already laid out we have many questions for the committee to consider the event hives need to be confiscated. Where are we to put these hives? Who is responsible for feeding them if needed? How long are we to hold them until they are disposed of? Hives need routine care and maintenance like disease treatments, are we supposed to maintain the hives until a court order is obtained?

I would also like to take some time to show you the ND Sensitive Area Map, and the features available within the map including access for the public to find apiary locations and beekeeper contacts. Ability for pesticide applicators to locate and contact beekeepers within 2 miles of a field and set up regions to watch for the movement of hives. Beekeepers also have the ability to manage their license, locations, see all inspections and update their contact information.

Chairman Luick and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to provide this information. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Registered Honey Bee Locations



- Locations within 1/4 mile of state and federal highways
- Locations more than 1/4 mile from state and federal highways