

Chairman Patten and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources committee:

I am writing in **Opposition to HB 1151** and ask that you vote **Do Not Pass**.

My name is Robert Newman. I am writing as a private citizen, but I am a wildlife biologist and ecologist on the faculty at the University of North Dakota with experience conducting research on wildlife disease.

I am also the President of the North Dakota Chapter of The Wildlife Society. You all will have received an email from our lobbyist today (3/15/2023). Please read it. Read especially the rebuttal of the claims people supporting the bill are making. None of the claimed mitigating factors are accurate. CWD is already in the state and spread would be devastating and long-lasting. The risk is very real! And it is not the only disease risk faced by deer.

The bill will create a very dangerous situation for deer populations in the state. I know there is a lot of support for the bill, with a range of reasons given. I also know that NDGF strongly opposes the bill. Everybody's opinion matters, but here's the thing - some of those opinions are based purely on personal beliefs and desires, whereas others are aware of the huge risk the state would certainly be taking, if the bill passes, based on the science of disease transmission.

Here is why I side with those opposing the bill:

We are risking the future of deer populations and of hunting opportunities in the entire state if this bill passes. Deer move around, you cannot isolate the increased risk of disease transmission resulting from unnatural congregation. NDGF is a well-respected agency staffed by knowledgeable and experienced professionals. ND is fortunate to be one of the states that has the wisdom to have a state wildlife veterinarian on staff, and an excellent one at that! Please listen to his testimony. If you disregard the expertise of NDGF, the responsibility for the fate of deer and related wildlife (elk, 2 species of deer, moose) is on the legislature. Why bother even having a state agency with real pros if you do not take advantage of it?

This is not a personal matter, nor should it be a political one, unless you don't care about the future of wildlife in the state. Given the importance that hunting and wildlife viewing has in the state both because of heritage and economic impact, I don't think you would willingly put future opportunities in jeopardy. That only leaves one choice:

I urge you to vote Do Not Pass on this ill-considered bill.

Respectfully,  
Robert Newman, Ph.D.