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Good morning, Chairman Patten and members of the committee, thank you for taking my testimony into consideration today.

My name is Cody Hilliard, and I am a lifelong North Dakotan and avid bowhunter, rifle hunter, and hound hunter. I am in favor of HB 1151.

I submitted written testimony that highlights three critical points as to why I am in favor of HB 1151 and the existing ineffective approach of the North Dakota Game & Fish, and I will quickly attempt to provide context to those points for your consideration.

The North Dakota Game & Fish's Wildlife Veterinarian has been touting for a number of years the strength of their data collection processes for CWD, and that testing and collecting dead heads is slowing the spread of CWD. But if that were true, why are we all here today? How is it that the Game & Fish's data collection and CWD intervention strategies are so effective, that a bunch of sportsmen with their own jobs who are not paid to study existing North Dakota and surrounding state's CWD data are able to challenge or otherwise present studies and state-based outcomes counter to the Game & Fish's?

The Game & Fish seems to only be interested in counting the number of CWD positive deer. Why have there been no efforts to engage in meaningful best-practices-based solutions to cure or otherwise treat CWD positive deer? You hear over and over again from the Game & Fish that deer will die from CWD; however, there is only 1 recorded case of a dead deer being found in the wild in North Dakota that had an unknown cause of death that - just so happened to have - CWD.

What you won't hear from the Game & Fish is that there are successful efforts in other states to support CWD immunity in deer herds. You will not hear them discuss the success stories or breakthroughs that high-fence operations have had in treating CWD positive deer AND CWD positive soil. You only hear fear that if we don't ban hunting using baiting we will increase the spread of CWD. But mind you it is still ok to feed animals and take pictures of them with a trail camera over a bait pile AND the Game & Fish still utilizes interceptive feeding in non-CWD positive units. But when you bring a bow or a firearm the chances of CWD increase, by their logic.

In a bit you will see other hunting groups come up here to take a stance against HB 1151. We can only wonder what their true agenda is. How can you have a so-called sportsmen's group stand up against an overwhelming group of sportsmen and still claim to represent sportsmen? They don't represent a group, they represent one person of that group with their own agenda.

From day 1, banning baiting under the guise of CWD mitigation has been a veiled attempt to further an ethics-based argument being pushed subliminally by the Game & Fish. As I wrote in my testimony to the House Committee, the Game & Fish has paid hunter education instructors grooming our future sportsmen and sportswomen to believe baiting is unethical. At that time, I did not want to expand too extensively as there was fear of retaliation against a future sportsman who was in the course at the time. When a Game & Fish employee was questioned at the House Committee hearing on this by Representative Ruby, he said he would not be in support of framing baiting as an ethical issue and he had not heard this happened. Even in the Game & Fish hunters education online portal, they are grooming future hunters to believe baiting is a "gray area" in terms of ethics. After the hearing was done and we went back to everyday life, the future sportsman returned to their hunter's education course to take the final exam. No more did the class sit down and the paid hunters education instructor said "hello" that the instructor went on a rant about how there was miscommunication and he never said baiting was unethical. Seems like there has been inconsistency amongst the Game & Fish regarding messaging of baiting to sportsmen.

I am sharing this information as context for your consideration as you listen to the testimony against this bill. What's the agenda that is really being pushed? Is the concern truly about CWD? Or is this an opportunity for ethics to be pushed on North Dakotans?

Thank you for your time. I will now stand for questions.

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Good morning, Chairman Porter and members of the committee, thank you for taking my testimony into consideration today.

My name is Cody Hilliard, and I am a lifelong North Dakotan and avid bowhunter, rifle hunter, and hound hunter. I am in favor of HB 1151 in order to create and enact a new section of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to baiting deer for hunting, where baiting deer for lawful hunting cannot be prohibited.

The part of the proposed legislation I would like to speak to is the inclusion of language stating "...the department may not issue rules or adopt a policy or practice prohibiting the baiting of deer for lawful hunting." Much of the pushback from North Dakotans regarding this bill hinges on this limitation of control by the North Dakota Game & Fish Department. I feel the inclusion of this language is necessary for the successful implementation of wildlife conservation and practices reflective - not only of good science - but also the wishes and wisdom of the people of North Dakota. Specifically, I will discuss three specific actions that have caused people, like myself, to lose faith and trust in the North Dakota Game & Fish.

1. Lack of Transparency

As some on the committee may already know, the momentum generated behind HB 1151 has roots in the way in which the North Dakota Game & Fish leadership rolled out and enacted its late summer and early fall public meetings regarding Chronic Wasting Disease or CWD. I attended the meeting in Minot held on August 29th, 2022 and heard from several others that attended similar meetings throughout the state.

I was under the impression upon receiving a notice and invitation to attend this meeting that it was a true public meeting - not a one-sided conversation with strategies and protections in place to ensure that members of the public could not ask questions and were discouraged from engaging in conversations regarding CWD with one another to learn and share information. The complete

and total lack of transparency was unnerving. It became clear that the experiences, collective wisdom, and wishes of the public were to be ignored.

2. Spread of Misinformation

As has been mentioned by many others supporting HB 1151, the North Dakota Game & Fish Department has succeeded in shifting their focus and allocation of resources to promote the notion that baiting is **unethical and is the primary cause of CWD transmission across the state**. This is categorically untrue; however, members of the general public would not and do not know this through the “Protect the Herd” stickers on government-issued vehicles and the misinformed and completely biased rhetoric that is spewed to youth and new hunters. One particular example of intentional misinformation took place on Monday evening in Bottineau at a Hunters Safety class, where a 20+-year instructor, allegedly (according to his own admission), the first **paid** Hunters Safety instructor in North Dakota, stated that baiting was an example of disrespecting fair chase and violating the ethics of hunting. He indicated to a room full of young and new hunters that baiting was banned in Bottineau’s unit **NOT** because of anything-related to CWD but rather because of ethical issues. This is just one example of information being manipulated to fit the agenda of the North Dakota Game & Fish rather than the Department clearly presenting unbiased information to allow young hunters and new hunters to make their own decisions.

3. Lack of Accountability

Some in opposition have cited concerns that this bill may limit the power of a state department head. I believe this bill does the complete opposite: HB 1151 builds accountability. This sets the precedent that decisions made and policies enacted by the department must be reflective of North Dakotans, with our emphasis on common sense, science, and good practice - not misinformation and lack of transparency.

Thank you. I will now stand for any questions.