

Thank you to Chair Beltz, Vice-Chair Hauck, and to all Committee members for the opportunity to testify on HB 1151.

My name is Tamar Lieberman, and I represent the Good Food Institute, a nonpartisan nonprofit organization committed to ensuring a free market and a level playing field for a wide range of alternative proteins, including cell-cultivated meat. We urge you to oppose HB 1151.

Currently, only two U.S. companies have received USDA and FDA approval to produce and sell cultivated meat. These products, which have undergone rigorous safety approvals meeting or exceeding those required of conventional meat, were piloted in just two restaurants—in California and Washington, D.C.—and were explicitly advertised and labeled as cultivated meat, a novelty food for curious consumers. As it stands today, largely due to the industry’s nascency, cultivated meat is not sold anywhere in the U.S.

HB 1151 does not address a threat or pressing problem for North Dakotans. It does, however, create significant challenges and threaten free market principles, limited government, food security, and even national security. We were pleased to see trade associations and libertarian think tanks and thought leaders, from the Meat Institute (attached) to the Institute of Justice to the CATO Institute (attached), echo these concerns. For example, a spokesperson from the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association said: “We do not support the route of banning these outright,” because, “We’re not afraid of competing with these products in the marketplace.”

They understand that a free market fuels American progress. North Dakotans who don’t want to eat cultivated meat simply won’t buy it or the local Cash Wise may not stock it—but that’s for the market to decide. This bill sets a dangerous precedent, potentially leading to unfounded bans on other foods and technologies in the future. What’s to stop states from banning cattle sales under the guise of public health? Or, in states where meat is unpopular, what stops legislatures from banning meat altogether? Once we abandon the principles of free-market and limited government, we risk far-reaching consequences.

Thankfully, cultivated meat also offers added public benefits; for example, its efficient production opens up significantly more water and land for farmers and eliminates the need for antibiotics used in conventional meat production. Thus, public health-wise, it lowers the risk of zoonotic diseases, pandemics, and antibiotic resistance. Large companies from ADM to Cargill have invested in this sector, alongside NASA, the Department of Defense, and leading universities in states like Indiana, North Carolina, and Texas. They understand this innovation has the potential to leverage American research into new jobs and into stronger food security and national security systems.

President Trump’s first U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue predicted years ago: “We’re going to see these technologies go to places around the world that are more conducive to their development, and frankly China may be one of those.” Indeed, while authoritarian nations like China decided to invest heavily in companies researching and producing cultivated meat as part of their five-year plan, here in the U.S., we’re years behind. Now instead of competing, we’re considering outright bans.

There’s enough room at the table for all types of food production methods and technologies that can feed more people safely. So, instead of banning this innovation, let’s support agricultural and technological advancements. States and countries that embrace these emerging technologies now will likely become leaders, reaping the economic rewards. This requires thoughtful collaboration across stakeholders—not a ban.

We urge you to vote “NO” on HB 1151. Thank you for your time and consideration.