Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 1207

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Chairman Beltz, and Members of the House Agriculture Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 1207, which proposes a change to how the North Dakota Beef Commission (NDBC) board is filled. I am writing to strongly oppose this bill, as it would remove dairy representation from the NDBC board, and I believe this would harm both the dairy and beef industries in our state.

As a dairy producer, I want to emphasize the critical role that dairy cattle play in the U.S. beef industry. Dairy producers contribute approximately 26% of the beef produced in the U.S., including finished dairy steers, cull dairy cows, and the growing market for beef-on-dairy crossbreeding. Without dairy's significant contributions, the beef industry would not be able to meet the growing consumer demand that is currently at record-high levels.

Currently, dairy producers are represented on the NDBC board, which ensures that our contributions to the beef industry are recognized and supported in decisions that affect both sectors. Removing dairy representation from the NDBC board would diminish the voice of dairy producers, who are vital to the success of the beef market, and could undermine the collaborative efforts that have allowed both industries to thrive together.

Here are several reasons why I oppose this bill:

1. Dairy's Critical Role in Beef Production: Dairy cattle are integral to U.S. beef production, contributing significantly to the overall supply of beef. From finished dairy steers to cull cows, and the growing trend of beef-on-dairy crossbreeding, dairy producers help meet the global demand for high-quality beef. Removing our representation from the NDBC board would overlook the essential contributions of dairy producers to the beef industry.
2. Ensuring Collaboration between Dairy and Beef Sectors: The success of both industries depends on the strong collaboration between dairy and beef producers. By maintaining dairy representation on the NDBC board, we can continue working together to ensure that both sectors grow sustainably and meet consumer demand. Dairy producers are invested in the future of beef, and we must have a voice in the decisions that shape this future.
3. Continued Support of the Beef Checkoff Program: Dairy producers contribute approximately 20% of the national Beef Checkoff funds, which are critical for promoting and sustaining the beef industry. Our contributions help support beef marketing and research efforts both domestically and globally. By removing dairy representation, we risk weakening the connection between the Beef Checkoff program and the dairy sector, which would ultimately affect both industries' ability to thrive.
4. Maintaining Expertise and Balance on the NDBC Board: The current appointment process allows the governor’s office to select board members based on their qualifications and expertise. This ensures that the NDBC board is composed of individuals who are knowledgeable and experienced in the beef industry. Changing to an election-based system could lead to a less effective board that may not adequately represent the interests of all cattle producers, including dairy.

In conclusion, I urge you to vote down House Bill 1207. Dairy producers are vital to the success and growth of the beef industry, and we deserve to have a voice on the NDBC board. I respectfully ask that you maintain dairy representation on the board to ensure that our interests are properly considered and supported.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Andrew and Jennifer Holle

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