

Chairman Beltz, Vice-Chairperson Hauck & Members of House Ag Committee:

My name is Kerry Dockter. I am a past president of I-BAND and a beef producer who supports HB 1207.

Thank you for this opportunity. My testimony centers on how times have changed since the inception of the beef checkoff program and why this bill is critical to ensuring fairness and representation for all producers today.

To illustrate my point, I'd like to draw an analogy from the evolution of small school systems in North Dakota's rural communities. As these schools have sought to provide the best possible education and opportunities for their students, they've often had to make difficult decisions—particularly regarding their athletic programs.

In many cases, small schools have formed co-ops or agreements with neighboring districts to ensure they have enough participation to field competitive teams. While these changes were initially met with opposition or resentment, they ultimately brought communities closer together. The schools worked collectively, realizing they shared a common goal: to do what was best for their students.

HB 1207 reflects a similar approach. This bill ensures that every producer who contributes to the beef checkoff has a voice and an opportunity to participate. Like those small-town sports co-ops, this change may face initial resistance, but it has the potential to unify producers. It prioritizes what is best for the beef industry as a whole, rather than individual organizations or interests.

At its core, this bill is not about choosing sides between two organizations. It's about fairness and representation for all producers who pay into the checkoff, regardless of their affiliations.

I respectfully ask for your support of HB 1207. By passing this bill, you will help unify producers and ensure the beef industry is positioned to work collaboratively toward its shared future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Kerry Dockter