NDSU NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Testimony on HB1207 – Addition of a Commodity Election for the North Dakota Beef Commission

January 16, 2025

Chairman Beltz and Members of the House Agriculture Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding HB1207, which proposes the addition of a commodity election for the North Dakota Beef Commission and includes NDSU Extension in some of the responsibilities. As NDSU Extension is currently tasked with conducting elections for county representatives to serve on several commodity councils and commissions in North Dakota, we offer the following background and items for consideration with this written testimony.

NDSU Extension is responsible for coordinating or assisting with elections for county representatives to serve on six commodity councils and commissions: the North Dakota Barley Council, the North Dakota Corn Council, the North Dakota Dry Pea and Lentil Council, the North Dakota Oilseed Council, the North Dakota Soybean Council, and the North Dakota Wheat Commission. These elections help ensure that each commodity group has elected representatives who reflect the interests and needs of producers across the state.

Elections for county representatives are coordinated by NDSU Extension's County Agricultural and Natural Resources (ANR) agents and are generally held in person during county events or educational programs. District elections are often conducted electronically via Zoom to improve accessibility and reduce travel costs.

The election process for these councils typically begins in November and December, with county elections held in January and February, then followed by district elections in March. The process includes associated costs such as advertising, printing, and postage, with total annual expenditures dependent on the number of producers and the commodity involved.

In review of HB1207, and based on NDSU Extension's experiences facilitating commodity elections, we note the following for consideration:

- **Mailing List Requirement**: HB1207 proposes conducting district representative elections for the Beef Commission through paper ballots mailed to eligible producers. Currently, NDSU Extension does not maintain a comprehensive mailing list for beef producers.
- **Election Costs**: The paper ballot approach will incur costs, including printing, mailing, and advertising. These costs are generally borne by the respective commodity councils, and the total expenditure would depend on the number of eligible producers in the Beef Commission election.
- **Timeline**: The process outlined in HB1207 suggests a different timeline than those used for other commodity elections facilitated by NDSU Extension.

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- **Election Participation**: Based on experience with other commodity elections, the mailing process has generally resulted in good participation rates.

In conclusion, NDSU Extension remains committed to ensuring fair and transparent elections for all commodity groups, including the North Dakota Beef Commission if they choose to engage in this process. Our primary purpose in providing this testimony is to outline some of the key considerations of the election process in the proposal set forth in HB1207.

Thank you for your time and consideration and please let me know if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

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