It is a privilege to be before you today to present my opposition to **HB 1207**. My name is **Kathy Tokach**, a lifelong rancher and proud resident of Morton County. I am here today to respectfully request a "NO" vote on this bill. While there are several issues within HB 1207 that I believe are flawed and inaccurate, I will focus on a few key concerns. I am more than willing to discuss these matters further with any of you individually, at your convenience.

Key Concerns Regarding HB 1207:

1. **District Boundaries for Beef Commission Directors:**
   One of the most concerning aspects of HB 1207 is how the proposed districts for electing Beef Commission directors are drawn. The bill stipulates that these districts should be based on the number of cattle in each, but the current mapping reveals a discrepancy of over 100,000 head of cattle between districts. This significant gap undermines fair and accurate representation. The cattle numbers used for these calculations come from the National Agricultural Statistics Survey, but it is crucial to understand that a “statistic” is an estimate, not an exact count. As such, the current mapping fails to accurately reflect the true distribution of cattle across the state and does not fairly represent beef producers in North Dakota.

2. **Timing of Director Elections:**
   HB 1207 proposes that new directors be seated on January 1st, right in the middle of the Beef Commission's fiscal year. This timing creates logistical challenges, particularly when it comes to making important funding decisions. For instance, the North Dakota Beef Commission has a funding proposal deadline of March 1st for the upcoming fiscal year (July 1st - June 30th). If new directors are seated just before this critical decision-making period, they will not have enough time to understand the state’s strategic priorities or the funding protocols, which could result in inappropriate or detrimental decision-making.

3. **Financial Implications:**
   Another major concern is the financial burden that HB 1207 could place on the North Dakota Beef Commission. The bill would require the Commission to use checkoff funds to cover the costs of administering the election process. Early estimates suggest that the election could cost over $30,000—equivalent to the sale of 30,000 head of cattle. Beyond this direct cost, there are additional expenses such as the time required from NDSU Extension staff, printing and mailing costs, and logistical issues due to ongoing postal service problems. Furthermore, it is unclear how the list of eligible beef producers will be compiled, given the restrictions imposed by confidentiality laws. These uncertainties raise serious concerns about the fairness and accuracy of the election process.

4. **Impact on Beef Promotion and Education:**
   As someone deeply involved in beef education and promotion, I am very concerned about the potential loss of funding for these essential programs of beef promotion and education. Last year, the North Dakota CattleWomen’s budget was reduced to approximately $20,000. With the possibility of $30,000 being redirected to manage an election process, the North Dakota CattleWomen could be left without the resources necessary to continue supporting beef education and promotion efforts. The North Dakota CattleWomen have been dedicated to educating the public for 74 years, reaching children

and families with accurate information about beef production, cattle care, environmental stewardship, and beef nutrition. I have personally witnessed the importance of this outreach when, for example, a third-grade student in Mandan expressed confusion about where hamburgers come from. The programs we provide—through educational materials, books, and public events—are critical in dispelling misconceptions and in promoting the nutritional benefits of beef. If funding is diverted to election costs, we will be unable to continue offering these vital programs. The North Dakota CattleWomen have long been committed to this work, and we volunteer our time and resources to make it happen. Without adequate funding, we will be unable to sustain these efforts, resulting in a significant loss for consumers, students, and the beef industry as a whole.

Conclusion:

In closing, I urge you to carefully consider the numerous flaws within HB 1207. From the unfair district boundaries and potential financial strain on the Beef Commission to the detrimental impact on our state's beef education programs, this bill poses serious risks to the integrity of our beef industry and the programs that support it. I respectfully ask that you vote "NO" on HB 1207 to protect the interests of North Dakota's beef producers and the vital educational initiatives that benefit our consumers and students.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to discuss these concerns further with any of you at your convenience.

Kathy Tokach
North Dakota Beef Producer
5520 County Road 81, St. Anthony, ND 58566
kattokach@gmail.com
701-400-7390