



House Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Testimony on HB 1174

North Dakota Game and Fish Department
Bill Haase, Assistant Wildlife Division Chief
January 17, 2025

Chairman Porter and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Bill Haase, and I serve as the Assistant Wildlife Division Chief for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, and I am testifying in support of HB 1174.

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department (Department) relies heavily on seasonal employees to accomplish many of our most important field activities throughout the summer months. Most of these seasonal employees are enrolled at or a recent graduate of a college or university majoring in a wildlife, natural resources, or other closely related program. Many of these seasonal employees work for the Department for 2-3 summers. Several of them end up being hired on for full-time permanent positions with the Department. In fact, around 68% of our current Biologists and Game Wardens began their careers with our agency working as a seasonal employee.

Between 2014 and 2022, the number of individuals applying for seasonal positions with the Department dropped over 70%.

The proposed bill would allow the Department to establish educational and community outreach programs to promote public understanding of fisheries and wildlife management and promote interest in pursuing careers in these fields. We feel having a program in place that would allow high school students to experience our work environment is critically important before they get to college and declare a major. Importantly, this bill would allow the Department to create a program which would allow participants to be involved in field activities. This program would include riding along with Department staff in compliance with established program guidelines. Such activities may include early morning pheasant crowing count or fish spawning to provide eggs to the fish hatcheries. These types of hands-on experiences are what our agency is hoping will ignite a passion in these individuals to start their lifelong career in North Dakota's outdoors.

The language in this bill was derived from similar bills that were passed in 2019 and 2023 that granted authority to the North Dakota Highway Patrol and North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to conduct similar job-shadowing activities. The proposed bill would give the Department clear statutory authority to conduct the job shadow activities which

we believe will greatly enhance our employee recruiting efforts. Chairman Porter and committee members, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department respectfully requests a **DO PASS** on HB 1174.

This concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions.