

Date: January 22, 2025

To: Members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee

From: Kirby Evanger, Bismarck, ND

Subject: Strong opposition to HB 1237

I am writing as a North Dakota resident hunter **urging you to DO NOT PASS house bill 1237**. I grew up on a farm in North Dakota and have lived here my entire life. Hunting is a life-long passion for me just like it is for so many North Dakota residents who cherish the outdoor hunting opportunities that North Dakota has to offer. This bill is unwise if we want to keep hunting as a heritage for North Dakota residents because this bill will only **further commercialize hunting**. If non-residents are able to hunt small game the entire hunting season for the same fee as a 14-day license, non-residents will be more likely to seek and establish **hunting land leases** meaning non-residents will have exclusive hunting rights to land that is currently potentially available to ND residents. All season hunting will also likely result in more **purchases of hunting land** by non-residents for exclusive access for the non-resident. Whether this leads to more hunting land leases or hunting land purchases or both by non-residents, it means that the resident hunter who lives and works in North Dakota will be pushed out and have far less hunting opportunities.

Access to hunting land in North Dakota is the single largest deterrent to our youth hunters, people interested in hunting with no direct landowner connections, and even experienced hunters who have seen access to land they've hunted on over many years now become off limits. HB 1237 would only serve to **accelerate and further diminish hunting land access for the ND resident**.

While I am opposed to this bill in its entirety for reasons noted above, I am especially concerned about **the impacts on sandhill crane hunting**. Many people do not realize that sandhill cranes are considered "small game" in the hunting regulations, so passage of this bill would open up season-long hunting of sandhill cranes in addition to upland game by non-residents which would be a bad idea for the sandhill cranes and ND resident sandhill crane hunters. I am an avid sandhill crane hunter in North Dakota now for over 40+ years, and anyone who knows anything about cranes knows that **they are extremely sensitive to pressure**. If this bill passes, the hunting pressure on sandhill cranes will likely increase considerably which will negatively impact the cranes and their migration patterns, as well as the availability of land to hunt cranes in addition to the quality of crane hunts for ND residents. Waterfowl seasons in ND are limited to a total of 14 days for non-residents. The same exact reasons for limiting non-resident hunting of ducks and geese to 14 days in North Dakota (i.e. migratory birds, water roosting birds, etc) applies to sandhill cranes as well. Thus, if this bill were to pass, **I would ask that an amendment be made exempting sandhill cranes from season-long hunting for non-resident hunters** and thus, still requiring a maximum of 14 days of hunting for sandhill cranes by non-residents per license purchased.

Many states have commercialized their hunting opportunities because of laws such as this one, and **as a result, hunting is largely open only to wealthy hunters**. Please help keep hunting as a heritage in North Dakota for all hunters to enjoy regardless of their income level by voting no on HB 1237. Thank you.