

# House Energy and Natural Resources Public Hearing

## Testimony on SB 2137

March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2025

Members of the North Dakota House of Legislature, my name is Ethan Baker. I am voicing my opposition to Senate Bill 2137 that would remove authority from the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (NDGF) to restrict hunting over supplemental feed. This would take away one of their tools to manage disease in the state.

Currently NDGF uses the restriction of baiting to limit chronic wasting disease (CWD) spread across North Dakota (ND). CWD is a fatal brain disease that affects deer, moose, and elk. Across other states throughout the United States there has already been documentation and peer reviewed research showing significant deer population declines due to CWD. In ND, with help from NDGF management actions CWD spread has been limited since its discovery within the state. While this is positive for the ND deer population, removing tools for NDGF such as baiting restrictions impairs their ability to limit CWD spread. An increase in CWD within ND could destroy all the work that has already been done by NDGF, and lead to those significant deer population declines identified in other states.

I am originally from Nebraska, and like North Dakota we also have multiple species of deer that can be impacted by CWD. Across both these states deer play a crucial role for recreational opportunity. Midwestern people love viewing deer in their habitat and being able to hunt them during season. Without the correct management of diseases, we risk consistent deer declines that will harm the public's ability to observe deer in the wild and harm the public's hunting potential across ND.

Finally, I wanted to end on the point that while current management using baiting restrictions revolves around CWD management, Senate Bill 2137 extends past this and would take away NDGF's ability to restrict baiting for any disease. In this constantly evolving world, this would severely hamper any efforts by the department to limit any disease outbreaks that happen in the future where they need to limit the dispersal of pathogens. I ask that you to vote no on Senate Bill 2137 to allow NDGF to follow their mission of protect, conserve, and improve deer populations so that deer populations remain healthy for future public recreational opportunity.

Thanks for your time,

*Ethan Baker*

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