

House Energy and Natural Resource Committee:

I write to express my opposition to SB 2137, which aims to prohibit North Dakota Game & Fish from implementing policies that prevent the use of supplemental feed on private property for hunting big game animals.

SB 2137 will eliminate an effective tool for managing diseases in free ranging wildlife and reduce the ability of NDGAF to address wildlife disease issues that emerge in game species; therefore, this bill stands against managing for healthy and sustainable wildlife populations in the state. Some diseases, such as bovine tuberculosis, could even have severe consequences for human and agricultural animal health. Feeding wild game often encourages animals to gather into larger groups for longer periods of time compared to natural animal behaviors, which increases how often animals contact one another. This type of feeding behavior subsequently increases the rate at which infectious diseases spread. This concept is well supported through research from prominent institutions such as Texas A&M University and the University of Georgia. This well-supported research is also why wildlife professionals suspend supplemental feedings to slow the spread of a variety of different wildlife diseases.

My opposition to SB 2137 is not about any specific disease. Rather, it is about making sure wildlife professionals in North Dakota have tools at their disposal to respond to and manage disease issues in the state. **Each state in the U.S. plays a significant role in maintaining wildlife populations for our nation, so all states should provide their professionals the freedom to employ tools that that are proven effective in managing wildlife diseases.**

Growing up in a household that relied on fish and game for sustenance, I learned from a young age the importance of taking care of the wildlife and land around me. In short, when you take care of wildlife and the land, they in turn take care of you. Throughout my life, I have held onto this core value and continue to incorporate practices for promoting ecosystem health throughout my life, including sharing this knowledge with my growing son, who at six years old is already an aspiring hunter. This is also why I am deeply concerned about policies like SB 2137 which prevent biologists from using effective tools to protect the health of our wildlife communities and threaten future recreational opportunities.

If you value healthy wildlife populations and sustainable hunting opportunities in North Dakota, I urge the members of the Committee to reject SB 2137.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Kathryn Benavidez