

Dear Members of the Senate Agriculture and Veteran Affairs Committee:

I respectfully urge a **Do Not Pass on SB 2137**. I am a hunter and love the outdoors. I also believe you should let state agencies do the job they are entrusted to do through state statute. The North Dakota Game and Fish Department (NDGF) is responsible for managing our state's wildlife resources for the benefit of all North Dakotans, both now and in the future. Their staff, including the State Wildlife Veterinarian, bring extensive knowledge and dedication to this mission. This bill would disregard the best available science and technical expertise of an entire agency, stripping it of its authority to issue rules and policies aimed at reducing the spread of fatal wildlife diseases.

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is the most transmissible prion disease, according to the National Institutes of Health. It is present before outward symptoms appear, meaning that by the time visible signs emerge, the disease has likely spread to a significant portion of the deer and elk population—animals that will ultimately die from it. Left unmanaged, CWD leads to population declines, which in turn reduce hunting opportunities with a corresponding reduction in available licenses and limit access to this valuable wildlife resource. Studies dating back to 2005 in Wyoming, Colorado, and South Dakota have demonstrated significant population declines if the spread of CWD is left unchecked. This bill puts a limited current gratification over the long-term sustainability of the resource. It is true that the NDGF cannot control all forms of spread, as they do not have the authority in state law to do so. However, they should be able to use any tool in their authority to limit disease transmission as much as possible.

Restricting the NDGF's ability to manage CWD could also have repercussions for efforts to control other wildlife diseases, such as bovine tuberculosis, which poses serious risks to livestock. Ranchers already face economic challenges, and additional disease-related losses could further threaten their livelihoods and rural economies. Targeted, science-based wildlife disease management is essential to mitigating these risks and should remain under the authority of those with the expertise and resources to handle it—the NDGF.

I urge you to trust the state agencies that work for the people of North Dakota. Please vote **Do Not Pass on SB 2137**

Sincerely,

Heather Husband