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## **Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee**

### **Hearing for HB 1509**

**February 20, 2025**

### **Testimony of Brian Amundson, North Dakota Ag Coalition**

Chairman Luick and members of the committee, my name is Brian Amundson. I am here today as the Vice Chair of the North Dakota Ag Coalition. The Ag Coalition has provided a unified voice for North Dakota agricultural interests for more than 40 years. Today, we represent 49 statewide organizations and associations that represent specific commodities or have a direct interest in agriculture. Our members seek to enhance North Dakota's agriculture industry through membership in the Ag Coalition.

The Ag Coalition considers policy action items, brought forward by our members, seriously. It takes a policy position on a limited number of issues every session and only on those that have a significant impact on North Dakota's agriculture industry. The North Dakota Ag Coalition opposes House Bill 1509, a bill that intends to change the refund process for the oilseed council.

While we appreciate the House Agriculture Committee's amendment to reduce the refund request period from one year to 90 days, we still strongly prefer the original 60-day request window and 30-day submission window. The current system was carefully designed to ensure that refunds are processed efficiently without creating financial instability for the oilseed council. Extending the window to 90 days still creates unnecessary uncertainty and complicates budgeting for checkoff investments in research, market expansion, and promotion.

Additionally, we oppose the provision requiring the oilseed council to provide refund applications through "secured electronic means." This language is vague and open to interpretation, creating potential compliance and cybersecurity challenges. Refund applications require Tax Identification Numbers (TINs) or Social Security Numbers (SSNs), as refunds represent taxable income from the sale of commodities. Moving to an electronic system raises serious security concerns, increasing the risk of data breaches and identity theft. Ensuring proper encryption and security protocols would be costly, diverting checkoff dollars away from critical industry investments.

Finally, we remain concerned that changes to the oilseed council's refund process could set a precedent for other checkoff programs. The current refund system was developed 15 years ago with broad producer input and is functioning effectively. There is no widespread producer demand for these changes and modifying the system risks weakening the research and promotion programs that help North Dakota producers remain competitive.

For these reasons, the North Dakota Ag Coalition urges you to oppose HB 1509 and instead reinstate the 60-day request and 30-day submission window to maintain a practical and predictable refund process. Remove the ambiguous "secured electronic means" language to protect producer identification security and checkoff funds.

As you know, North Dakota producers have been – and will continue to be – the driving force in the future of North Dakota's number one industry and the state's economy. It is essential that we listen to them and carefully consider any changes to processes that were developed thoughtfully and deliberately.

The North Dakota Ag Coalition encourages your opposition to HB 1509. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

# North Dakota AG COALITION

*Providing a unified voice on behalf of North Dakota agricultural interests.*

The North Dakota Ag Coalition is a nonpartisan federation of 50 organizations representing specific commodities and/or associations with a direct interest in agriculture, for the specific purpose of addressing issues that affect North Dakota agriculture. Organized in April 1982, the North Dakota Ag Coalition has been successful in providing a unified voice on behalf of North Dakota agricultural interests for more than 40 years.

## Issues of Interest:

- Agriculture research and extension ● Value-added agriculture
- Renewable fuels ● Commodity check-offs
- Rural infrastructure ● Conservation

## Executive Committee:

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# The North Dakota Ag Coalition and its member organizations look forward to working with you during the 2025 Legislative Session

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## GENERAL MEMBERSHIP:

I-BAND  
Milk Producers Association of ND Inc.  
Minn-Dak Farmers Co-op  
ND Ag Aviation Association  
ND Ag Consultants  
ND Agricultural Association  
ND Agri-Women  
ND Barley Council  
ND Beekeepers Association  
ND Corn Growers Association  
ND Corn Utilization Council  
ND Dry Bean Council  
ND Elk Growers  
ND Ethanol Producers Association  
ND Farm Credit Council  
ND Farmers Union  
ND Grain Dealers Association  
ND Grain Growers Association  
ND Irrigation Association  
ND Lamb and Wool Producers Association  
ND Oilseed Council  
ND Pork Council  
ND Soybean Growers Association  
ND State Soil Conservation Committee  
ND Stockmen's Association  
ND Wheat Commission  
Northern Canola Growers Association  
Northern Pulse Growers Association  
Northland Potato Growers Association  
Northwest Landowners Association  
Red River Valley Sugarbeet Growers  
US Durum Growers Association  
Winery Association of North Dakota

## ASSOCIATE MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

Ellingson Companies  
Garrison Diversion Conservancy District  
Grand Farm Research and Education Initiative  
ND Association of Agricultural Educators  
ND Association of Soil Conservation Districts  
ND Beef Commission  
ND Department of Agriculture  
ND Department of Water Resources  
ND Farm Management Education Association  
ND Grazing Lands Coalition  
ND Rural Water Systems Association  
ND Soybean Council  
ND State Seed Commission  
ND Water Resource Districts Association  
NDSU Agriculture  
Northern Crops Institute  
Red River Retention Authority

