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Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 2137. My name is Cody Hilliard, and I am a lifelong North Dakotan and dedicated hunter. I support this bill because it upholds private property rights while addressing the unintended negative consequences of banning hunting over supplemental feed.

As landowners and hunters, we understand the importance of managing our wildlife and habitat responsibly. Allowing hunting over supplemental feed ensures that more nutrition is made available to deer, benefiting their health and survival, particularly during North Dakota's harsh winters. When baiting is prohibited, it reduces the incentive for hunters and landowners to provide supplemental feed, ultimately limiting the amount of food available for all deer and putting additional strain on deer populations.

Banning hunting over supplemental feed creates unintended consequences that go beyond hunting itself. Deer that lack access to adequate nutrition are more susceptible to disease, predation, and winter mortality. Supplemental feeding not only benefits the individual deer that are hunted but also contributes to the overall health of local herds by introducing additional food resources into the habitat. This practice supports healthier, more resilient deer populations, which aligns with the long-term goals of wildlife conservation.

SB 2137 also respects the rights of private property owners to manage their land and wildlife as they see fit. Decisions about the use of supplemental feed on private property should remain with the landowners and hunters who are actively involved in managing these resources.

Furthermore, surrounding states are actively feeding their deer herds during harsh winters to ensure their survival, and they have thriving herd populations.

I urge this committee to support SB 2137 to protect private property rights, ensure the health of our deer herds, and sustain the practices that make North Dakota a leader in responsible wildlife management. Thank you for your time and consideration.