

Good morning Mr. Chairman and Committee members! My name is Erika Kenner and I am a beef producer and farmer from Leeds. My father and I run a diversified grain and cattle ranch where we calve out 450 head of cows, have a bull sale and raise barley, wheat, soybeans and corn.

On our farm, we have always appreciated the check-off programs for all the commodities and what they do for us as producers, especially the beef check-off. I personally have been impressed with the promotion, education and research the ND Beef Commission has done. I am proud to know that I have contributed to funding the Check-Off programs. Each year at the ND Stockmen's Convention, we receive an update from the Beef Commission in the committee I chair. This last year, we learned about the 2023 Return On Investment Study that I believe you all have recently received. The statistics prove a positive impact from the check-off dollar to the National beef industry. Our state has developed new programs recently and one program I especially like is the work they've done with high school and college athletic programs in Powered by Beef! Without check-off dollars, these programs wouldn't exist.

I understand that the ND Beef Commission members are decided differently than some commodity groups in our state. But is that a reason to change? How do we know theirs is the right way? The beef industry is different than the other commodity groups. For one, our commission is made up of the different sectors of the industry which is important because there are major differences that need to be represented. It keeps all the sectors working together for the best interests of the beef industry. There also isn't a printed list of producers anywhere. I know anytime there is a disaster program for cattle producers, my local FSA office is always asking me for beef producers' names near me because they do not know who they all are in our county.

Beef producers aren't required to sign-up their operations at the FSA office. Soybean, corn and wheat producers, on the other hand, are generally part of the farm programs through FSA. The process identified in this bill has the potential to miss many.

The members who have historically served on the Beef Commission have been producers or livestock market owners who have large responsibilities running their operations. Ranching is very labor intensive especially during certain times of the year, but these producers graciously give their time to the Commission because they believe it is important to the industry. Serving on the committee and running a campaign for an election are two different things, however. As you all know, campaigning takes time reaching out to voters. Many of these producers will not have time to campaign and will choose not to run, losing valuable people who could have served.

Also, elections are expensive – printing and mailing costs add up. Plus, who knows if the mail service will even get the ballot delivered. Mail service has been challenging lately. I mailed 900 bull sale catalogs last year. 243 of them never were delivered and 184 of them

were last tracked to Bismarck. I am not the only beef producer having a bull sale who has struggled with that in our state.

Being a member of other organizations who hold elections done by mail-in ballots, I have seen that as time has gone on, less and less people vote in the elections anymore. There may be people interested the first year, but I'm certain as time goes on, voter interest and participation will dwindle, yet the industry will be spending all that money that could otherwise be used promoting beef and educating young people why beef is so important in our diets.

The system we have in place now works! It allows for the beef industry sectors to all have a voice and does allow for self-nomination. I encourage you to give SB 2202 a do-not-pass recommendation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and the Committee, for your time today!