

**February 1st, 2023**

To Chairman Porter and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee,

I, Peter Olson, am writing this testimony in support of House Bill 1538.

As an outdoor enthusiast and outright fishing fanatic, it pains me to see how the great state of North Dakota has been and continues to be negatively affected by the current legislation and restrictions that are currently being placed on the fishing tournament scene. What makes this so difficult is that these restrictions apply to nearly all of the groups and organizations that utilize the amazing fishing resources that are in our state.

As an avid angler, one of the best ways for me to learn and understand fishing better is to put my knowledge and skills to the test. The only true way to test myself is to compete against other anglers in tournaments and competitions. But sadly, the North Dakota Legislation and North Dakota Game and Fish Department currently enforces a conservation fee that requires tournament organizers to pay a 10% fee which tends to place an unhealthy financial burden on these organizations. It does not seem to matter if it's a simple/small club event, non profit fundraising event or a large tournament circuit like the National Walleye Tour or Bassmaster series, everyone is negatively affected by the current legislation.

For over twelve years, I have been a small business owner located in Washburn, North Dakota and am in the business of selling of fishing tackle and educating other anglers. Part of being a business owner is looking for ways to expand and provide exposure for my company, and participating and/or attending fishing tournaments is a phenomenal way of doing just that! I have been fishing/participating in tournaments and competitions for many years and love testing myself as an angler but also supporting my business as well as other businesses and organizations. I find it quite ironic that the North Dakota Department of Agriculture supports my business more the North Dakota Game and Fish Department.

For three years myself and my younger brother spent time traveling to Minnesota to participate in high school fishing competitions through the Student Angler Organization and the Student Angler Tournament Trail. Although we learned a ton about how to be better anglers and conservationists by going to different locations across Minnesota, it was difficult to pursue tournament angling as a whole because of the inability to simply be tournament anglers in our home state. This also has lead to less exposure for my business locally and the inability to organize my own educational tournament events for others via online resources. This wouldn't be an issue if the North Dakota Legislation and North Dakota Game and Fish were supportive of tournament angling in my home state.

What House Bill 1538, if passed, would do is allow a much smoother approach to the tournament angling scene in North Dakota and allow more and more people of all ages to get in the outdoors to compete and most of all, have fun learning how to understand and respect the amazing fishing resources that North Dakota provides.

Thank you for taking the time to read and listen to the testimony of myself and others who support making North Dakota a better place by allowing economical growth, pathways into the sport of fishing and the opportunity to learn, teach and understand the outdoors.

Thank you!

**PETER OLSON**

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