

Chairman Porter, committee members, my name is Gabe Thompson a 4th generation rancher from Antler ND and past instructor for 15 years in our local youth archery club Berthel Crossed Bows. I am here today testifying in favor of HB 1151

I believe strongly that the creation of law should have 3 foundational principles, a three legged stool if you would

1. A clear need for a new law
2. Fact and truth be the basis of advocating for or against a bill
3. All bills be written in accordance with our state and Federal Constitutions and simple common sense.

1. As a result of the actions of the NDG&F over the past few years on this issue there has been demonstrated a need for this bill ...in a series of 3 public meetings on CWD and baiting held this fall which I attended in Minot, those sportsmen in attendance were told at the start of the meeting we would not be allowed to ask questions during the presentation. We were then told we would not be allowed to ask questions after the presentation in an open forum setting where each person in attendance could hear both the questions from sportsmen and the answer from the G&F ... we were then told we would be allowed to ask questions in private one on one settings with G&F employees positioned at various locations around the room NO public open forum setting discussion was allowed on this very important topic and the regulations this state agency with no elected positions or real direct accountability to the people those regulations directly impact even after they were asked to reconsider. We NEED an open forum where issues, regulations and laws impacting us as sportsmen and women can be debated and the legislature allows that forum when state agencies do not.

2. In advocating to support their restrictions on baiting there have been claims made that the science of the G&F simply does not back up. There has been no studies done directly looking at the spread of CWD by baiting and yet the claim has been made baiting is the action that accelerates spread of CWD and yet the unit 3F2 where hunting over bait has been banned for over a decade..3 life cycles of the average deer in ND according to the G&F....CWD positives are increasing at rates far beyond units where hunting over bait is still allowed..The G&F position is that if the ban reduces risk by 1% it is worth it.....but yet that position is ignored when the real science they share on their website that shows CWD prions live in the environment on things such as corn or turnip plants in a food plot can remain viable and transferable forever and can be transferred by saliva contact just as they claim is done at a bait pile is discounted and worse ignored as the NDG&F actually encourages and FUNDS the planting of food plots that are used by sportsmen to attract, congregate and hold deer to an area which starts in early spring when the plants first start emerging and carries though by design into late winter early spring months providing a food source for deer that naturally yard up in numbers by the hundreds in some of these G&F funded food plots.... If you are going to claim science is the basis of your regulations.....you can not ignore and pick and choose what science you follow or it begins to appear an agenda is driving the narrative rather than the actual science.

3. ND sportsmen felt so strongly about the importance of protecting the opportunity of hunting in our state we created a constitutional amendment that reads as follows

Hunting, trapping and fishing and the taking of game and fish are a valued part of our heritage and will forever be preserved for the people and managed BY LAW and regulation for the good of the people. We knew that the voice of the people is critical in protecting that heritage and the words "by law" were specifically placed into the amendment to allow the legislative venue to give the people that opportunity when unelected state agencies unaccountable to the people do not ...that is the constitutional language this bill is in accordance with

In closing, with this issue common sense seems to rise in importance possibly more than degrees or training. A few years back when ranchers saw deer numbers congregating in their feedyards all winter long increasing by the hundreds each year and that information shared with the NDG&F that they had a rapidly growing deer herd to the point of being out of control was ignored and the agency finally had to sell unlimited amounts of deer tags to sportsmen at numbers almost twice what is typically sold...to try and rectify the mismanagement, on our ranch we saw over 600 deer congregating from mid Oct as a result of a blizzard. We opened our ranch where our homes are to people asking on social media for hunters to come in and fill tags. In the Nov and special late Jan rifle season held to reduce population we had over 30 deer harvested. In the last month of bow season in Dec. we had over 70 additional deer taken out of a heated elevated stand that allowed people who otherwise would have stayed home in minus 20 degree weather the opportunity to harvest a deer. This reduction of the numbers of deer in our ranch yard by 15% was done because of the tool of baiting that brought those deer to the hunter. Out of 70 archery harvested deer only 1 was not recovered the rest were taken at a known yardage of 15 yards with a clean ethical shot that brought success to kids from age 11 to our neighbor who harvested the last deer of her bow hunting seasons at age 82 all without any financial exchange

Later that winter when a biologist from the G&F finally traveled to our ranch in response to our request....as we stood watching 500 deer congregated in front of a corn silage pile and ground hay piles where for 2 ½ months they had been interacting with nose to nose contact depositing saliva over unmeasurable areas of feed to be contacted by hundreds of other deer over the next 3 months....I relayed what we had done to reduce deer numbers in our yard.....when I was done this biologist with an alphabet soup of letters behind his name listing his qualifications looked me in the eye and suggested that the tool of baiting we had used to reduce that population of deer when they had not been able to for 3 years through their management was what was spreading CWD....Common sense would suggest otherwise. I strongly encourage a do pass on this bill.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify today and would answer any questions to the best of my ability the committee may have.