

Cody Hilliard
280 102nd St NW
Souris, ND 58783
(701) 460-7295

Good morning, Chairman Porter and members of the committee, thank you for taking my testimony into consideration today.

My name is Cody Hilliard, and I am a lifelong North Dakotan and avid bowhunter, rifle hunter, and hound hunter. I am in favor of HB 1151 in order to create and enact a new section of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to baiting deer for hunting, where baiting deer for lawful hunting cannot be prohibited.

The part of the proposed legislation I would like to speak to is the inclusion of language stating "...the department may not issue rules or adopt a policy or practice prohibiting the baiting of deer for lawful hunting." Much of the pushback from North Dakotans regarding this bill hinges on this limitation of control by the North Dakota Game & Fish Department. I feel the inclusion of this language is necessary for the successful implementation of wildlife conservation and practices reflective - not only of good science - but also the wishes and wisdom of the people of North Dakota. Specifically, I will discuss three specific actions that have caused people, like myself, to lose faith and trust in the North Dakota Game & Fish.

1. Lack of Transparency

As some on the committee may already know, the momentum generated behind HB 1151 has roots in the way in which the North Dakota Game & Fish leadership rolled out and enacted its late summer and early fall public meetings regarding Chronic Wasting Disease or CWD. I attended the meeting in Minot held on August 29th, 2022 and heard from several others that attended similar meetings throughout the state.

I was under the impression upon receiving a notice and invitation to attend this meeting that it was a true public meeting - not a one-sided conversation with strategies and protections in place to ensure that members of the public could not ask questions and were discouraged from engaging in conversations regarding CWD with one another to learn and share information. The complete and total lack of transparency was unnerving. It became clear that the experiences, collective wisdom, and wishes of the public were to be ignored.

2. Spread of Misinformation

As has been mentioned by many others supporting HB 1151, the North Dakota Game & Fish Department has succeeded in shifting their focus and allocation of resources to promote the notion that baiting is **unethical and is the primary cause of CWD transmission across the state**. This is categorically untrue; however, members of the general public would not and do not know this through the “Protect the Herd” stickers on government-issued vehicles and the misinformed and completely biased rhetoric that is spewed to youth and new hunters. One particular example of intentional misinformation took place on Monday evening in Bottineau at a Hunters Safety class, where a 20+-year instructor, allegedly (according to his own admission), the first **paid** Hunters Safety instructor in North Dakota, stated that baiting was an example of disrespecting fair chase and violating the ethics of hunting. He indicated to a room full of young and new hunters that baiting was banned in Bottineau’s unit **NOT** because of anything-related to CWD but rather because of ethical issues. This is just one example of information being manipulated to fit the agenda of the North Dakota Game & Fish rather than the Department clearly presenting unbiased information to allow young hunters and new hunters to make their own decisions.

3. Lack of Accountability

Some in opposition have cited concerns that this bill may limit the power of a state department head. I believe this bill does the complete opposite: HB 1151 builds accountability into what is now an unaccountable department. This sets the precedent that decisions made and policies enacted by the department must be reflective of North Dakotans, with our emphasis on common sense, science, and good practice - not misinformation and lack of transparency.

Thank you. I will now stand for any questions.