

**Date:** November 5, 2019  
**To:** House Government Operations Committee  
**From:** Andrew Vermeesch  
Legislative Counsel, Michigan Farm Bureau  
**Re:** Written Testimony on House Bill 4687

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to House Bill 4687 which would repeal the baiting and feeding ban put into place January 31, 2019.

Michigan Farm Bureau is the state's largest general farm organization representing more than 42,000 farm family members. Our policy efforts are grassroots-driven — local members develop, debate, and adopt our policy positions on an annual basis, first at the county and then state-level.

As you are all aware, in 2018, the Natural Resources Commission issued a baiting and feeding ban for free ranging-deer in Michigan's Lower Peninsula starting January 31, 2019. The decision was made after a scientific review panel and stakeholder workgroup recommended a ban as an effort to slow-growing threats of diseases in the state. In Michigan, the two most common disease threats facing our free-ranging deer herd are bovine tuberculosis (TB) and chronic wasting disease (CWD). Bovine TB and CWD affect both our outdoor enthusiasts as well as our agricultural industries.

Throughout discussions, Michigan Farm Bureau, along with our partners from other sportsmen's organizations, have been strong advocates to implement a baiting and feeding ban based on our organization's policy and the scientific research that links artificial baiting and feeding to increased risk of disease transmission.

Specifically, our organization's member-developed and annually approved (#89 Wildlife Management) policy states:

*The decision to allow baiting and feeding should be based on veterinary/animal health science. MFB opposes artificial baiting and feeding of free-ranging deer.*

In both diseases, artificial baiting and feeding does not cause CWD or Bovine TB, but they are vectors for transmission. Eliminating the practice will not eradicate either bovine TB or CWD nor eliminate all risk for the disease to spread because deer socially interact on some level in nature. However, research does indicate that artificial baiting and feeding increases unnatural concentration of the deer herd outside of their normal environment and bring together groups of deer that would likely not cross paths otherwise. Furthermore, artificial baiting and feeding increases the likelihood of contaminated fluids from one animal be passed to another when eating off the same pile which would not have occurred in their natural settings. These man-made factors contribute to an increase in prevalence for both bovine TB and CWD.

