

House Agriculture, Water & Natural Resources

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SB25-053 Protect Wild Bison

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
<p>Emma Ragona For Conservation Colorado</p>	<p>Good afternoon members of the committee,</p> <p>My name is Emma Ragona and I am representing myself and Conservation Colorado. I am an enrolled member of the Sicangu Lakota (Rosebud Sioux), one of the original 51 tribes with historical ties to Colorado. I am also the Jefferson County Organizer for Conservation Colorado for the last 3 years. I am here today to urge a yes vote on SB-25-053.</p> <p>As a Lakota, the Bison or “tatunka” in Lakota, was apart of our survival on the great plains. Not only did my ancestors follow the bison herds but the bison supplied the Lakota people with everything they needed. From food, to weapons, to toys. Ribs were used for sleds and even the bladder was used as a bag. The Lakota people never wasted an inch of the bison. And because of how strongly they are intertwined in our culture it is near impossible to explain the cultural significance of bison and not only Lakota people but Native people of the great plains. Many of our ceremonies and gatherings incorporate the bison. It is the staple in Lakota culture and spirituality. Which is why the near extinction of bison in the 19th century was directly based on getting rid of Natives for white settlers yet another genocidal tactic the United States Government enacted against Native peoples. Not only was this detrimental to the Lakota people but also the animal itself almost facing extinction.</p> <p>SB25-053 directly addresses a critical need to protect wild bison that naturally foray into Colorado from neighboring states by reclassifying them as wildlife under state law. This essential step will afford wild bison the same level of protection as other wildlife species within Colorado's borders and empower Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) with the clear authority to proactively manage wild bison populations moving forward. This proactive approach is vital for ensuring the well-being of wild bison and mitigating potential conflicts that may arise.</p> <p>This bill will also be a step in the right direction in reparations between Native communities and the government because this legislation offers significant recognition of the profound cultural significance of wild bison to Indigenous communities, acknowledging their historical and spiritual importance. Protecting wild bison aligns with broader concerns regarding the ethical treatment and conservation of this iconic species, recognizing their intrinsic value within our shared landscape. Effective management of wild bison is not only a matter of cultural respect but also an ecological imperative, contributing to biodiversity and healthy ecosystems.</p>

	<p>We at Conservation Colorado urge a yes vote with the amendment to do the right thing of the first peoples of this land and the four-legged that were here long before us. Thank you</p>
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