

Mr. Chairman, members of this committee. For the record, I am Kelly Flynn. I rise in opposition to HB 486. For my entire life, I've been a member of five generation family ranch outside of Townsend. Over the past 140 years we've raised hay, grain, cattle, and sheep on our ranches outside of Townsend. For the past 40 years, we've hosted a few guests each year to our ranch — both hunters and summer guests. We've struggled to survive and hosting guests has meant the difference between our surviving and not surviving. **HOSTING GUESTS HAS MEANT THE DIFFERENCE FOR US TO SURVIVE!** Hosting guests has allowed us to better steward the land for livestock and for wildlife.

Mr. Chairman, members of this committee. I rise today in opposition to this bill which places restrictions on landowners who open their land to outfitted hunters who are using one of the outfitter-sponsored licenses.

Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned at the beginning of my testimony, I come from a ranch family. Four ranch properties contribute to our "whole" ranch over by Townsend. For many years, we've tried to balance our outfitting business with allowing some free public hunting on several of our ranches. Again this past year we allowed almost 100 hunters to hunt on those ranches with no charge. For portions of those lands, we have no restrictions on bucks or bulls. We offer free public hunting on some of the SAME property we outfit. This bill strikes right at the heart of that balance we've tried to create between allowing the public to hunt on some of our property while we try to survive & steward the land by outfitting on a portion of our ranch. It also strikes right to the heart of a compromise developed between thousands of hours of meetings between landowners, sportsmen, and outfitters via the Governor's Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council and the resultant bill passed by the 1995 Legislature. I was fortunate to be one of the original members of that council and I appreciate the many hours that sportsmen, landowners, lawmakers, and agency folks have contributed to create a win-win program for this state. If this bill passes, that delicate balance between landowners, sportsmen, and outfitters is certainly threatened..

Will the passage of this bill open up ranches for free public hunting? Or will passage of this bill force ranchers to pursue other avenues of survival which will ultimately lead to closing their lands to any public hunting or simply selling their lands to folks who effectively eliminate those lands from hunter & wildlife habitat?

Mr. Chairman, members of this committee, most of us in the outfitting industry and the ranching & farming community are Montanans. We feel lucky to live and work in this splendid rural state. We're active in our communities and its organizations. We spend our dollars in our towns. We pay taxes to our counties. This bill jeopardizes our family's ability to survive and steward the land. **THIS BILL** does threaten the **LIVELIHOOD** of **FARMERS, RANCHERS, OUTFITTERS,** and **SMALL BUSINESSPEOPLE** around our state.

Mr. Chairman, members of this committee, I urge you to vote NO on this bill. Thank you!

Kelly & Jill Flynn