

Testimony for SB23-103—Update Colorado Recreational Use Statute

Good afternoon! My name is Tyler Garrett. I am the Director of Government Relations for Rocky Mountain Farmers Union. We have approximately 17,000 members across Colorado, New Mexico, and Wyoming. We represent the interests of family farmers and ranchers through our member-driven policy process where members decide the policy for which we advocate.

We stand in support of SB23-103. Farmers and ranchers are stewards of the land. Other than careful attention paid to the soil and water, the grazing on their property, rotating crops, and other regenerative practices, farmers and ranchers understand that being good stewards means allowing others to experience and be part of the land. Therefore, many of our members already allow individuals to access their property for recreational use.

Now, our members do highly prioritize property and privacy rights, which include barring individuals from trespassing. The family farmers and ranchers that we represent do not want individuals to trespass on their property, particularly because of the potential risks to property owners due to liabilities, such as, if an individual were to fall and injure themselves. As you know, this is a fence me out state and the burden is on the property owner to properly maintain their fence to keep their livestock in while keeping individuals out.

We believe this bill would ease some of the concerns that farmers and ranchers have when deciding whether or not to allow someone to access to their property by reducing their liability if someone injures themselves while on the farm or ranch. This would mean that more of the public may be able to access farms or ranches for recreational use, such as hunting, bird watching, or hiking. Ultimately, we would also hope that this would lead to less trespassing events.

Again, we support SB23-103 and ask that you vote yes on this bill. Thank you for the time. I am happy to answer any questions.