

March 10, 2021

To: House Appropriations Committee
Re: SB 2018 – ND Tourism Division Budget

To Chairman Monson and Committee Members,

I am Suzie Kenner, the Director for the Devils Lake Tourism Division. I am writing to you today to ask your full support of the Senate approved version of 2018, including the addition of the seven-million dollars (\$7,000,000) for destination marketing.

I realize that seems like a large amount of money to give to a division, but we cannot sit by and just “wish” people to come to our state and spend money. We need to actually put work and effort into it, and that takes dollars. South Dakota’s current tourism marketing budget is \$30.2 million per year, Minnesota’s is \$32.2 million and Montana’s budget sits at \$19.5 million. North Dakota needs to boost the budget for North Dakota Tourism and give them the opportunity to prove that marketing works, not just for the travel industry but for job creation and relocation and economic development as a whole and have the opportunity to at least be competitive with these other states.

Another note that I would like to touch on is fall and winter activities. If we were taught anything in the year 2020, it’s that people have flocked to the outdoors. North Dakota also has this niche. We aren’t just a Memorial Day through Labor Day destination as some may think. Abu Garcia, a national fishing company, just ranked Devils Lake 18th out of 100 for the best fishing destination. We have great ski areas in the state, as well as outdoor winter activities in our downtowns and fall hunting that far exceeds other states. Our small CVBs or Destination Marketing Associations need the help of the state tourism division to push us out on the national level. We are all funded on local hospitality and lodging tax dollars and with the cancellation of events, meetings, concerts and the like, our budgets and staff have also dwindled. The marketing dollars will provide cooperative opportunities that can help not only push the state, but our individual cities as well, and get our businesses and attractions back on track.

Tourism goes beyond inspiring travel. Coming out of the other side of this pandemic, North Dakota is geared to come out on top, but we need your help to properly fund tourism to not only keep the momentum going but stay in the race with the other states that are also competing for the same market share. To put it bluntly, we need the tools for our toolbox.

I urge you to give them the tools we need, please support SB2018 including the \$7 million in one-time funding.

Respectfully,



Suzie Kenner, Executive Director