

Engrossed SB 2258

House Human Services

March 16, 2021

Katie Fitzsimmons, NDUS Director of Student Affairs

701-328-4109 | katie.fitzsimmons@ndus.edu

Chair Weisz and House Human Services Committee Members: My name is Katie Fitzsimmons and I serve as the Director of Student Affairs in the North Dakota University System Office. I am testifying in strong support of Engrossed SB 2258, as it would support our students who have experienced or currently are experiencing homelessness.

Gaining admission to college can be an uphill battle for any given student, but our students that are experiencing homelessness have more obstacles stacked against them. If a child finds themselves in a shelter care program or in an emergency shelter situation, we need to ensure that option is safe.

The best paths out of homelessness include safe shelter, education, employment, and adequate health care. Though the majority of the youth that could be positively affected by this study are not our current students within the North Dakota University System, the NDUS is invested in the homeless and/or unaccompanied youth in our state. Those students deserve access to success through education just like all our youth. If we can ensure safe shelter options for youth when they are experiencing incredibly difficult and traumatizing times, we are one step closer to ensuring academic success, which can lead to a lifetime of stability.

Please help us remove barriers for our students experiencing homelessness. This study has the potential to create a profound impact on this vulnerable population in North Dakota.

The North Dakota University System Office respectfully request a **Do Pass on Engrossed SB 2258**. Thank you for your time and consideration.