



January 22, 2021

Honorable Ray Holmberg
State Senator and Appropriations Committee Chair

Testimony before Senator Holmberg and Appropriations Committee Members, January 25, 2021.

Dear Senator Holmberg and Members of the Committee,

My name is Maria Miller and I am the Executive Director of the Medora Convention and Visitors Bureau. I'm writing to unequivocally support the Governor's proposed \$461-thousand increase in the Tourism Division Budget for the Biennium that begins next summer and his proposal for an additional two-million dollars (\$2,000,000) for destination marketing. The state increase is more vital than ever this year, as most of our local destination marketing budgets, Medora's included are dependent on local lodging tax that has been cut drastically as a result of Covid-19 hampering travel across our state and country. This loss is seen in both the leisure traveler as well as in group travel, such as bus groups, small meetings and events. It is essential that we increase marketing for tourism recovery. Nearby states such as South Dakota have doubled down on destination marketing during the pandemic and we need to be able to compete and increase our marketing efforts. We, like our tourism partners and hospitality businesses across the state will depend more than ever on the state's business focus and commerce grant delivery for small businesses and the need for them to continue marketing efforts to assist with recovery and business growth. The increase in funding will help support marketing the state and build our image awareness.

Tourism and travel are pure forms of economic development, with visitors leaving their money behind when they return home. Tourism Marketing boosts the national and international character of the entire state. Tourism is also the first step in a decision to move to a new state, in fact that is what first brought me to North Dakota, a state now for 8 months I have called home. Just over a year ago I made my first visit to North Dakota and thus started my economic relationship with the state. When someone comes to a new state as a tourist first, they are more likely to consider working, living, or starting a business in that state. It was the quality marketing that first brought me to North Dakota and to Medora! During the first couple of months in my new role, the Tourism Team made office visits and reached out via email and Zoom. While due to the pandemic I have yet to meet them all in person, I can tell you they are passionate and committed to North Dakota, encouraged for the future and see the potential of all we can accomplish together. With the proper tools and funding they can stay competitive with other states around the country and share all that it means to be ND legendary!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maria Miller".

Executive Director

**Medora
Convention & Visitors Bureau**

330 Pacific Ave. PO Box 433
Medora, ND 58645

701 • 623 • 4830

info@medorand.com

www.medorand.com