

**North Dakota Senate Appropriations Committee  
Chairman – Senator Ray Holmberg  
January 21, 2020**

**Testimony**

**By: Dr. Polly Peterson, President**

**University of Jamestown**

**Email: [ppeterso@uj.edu](mailto:ppeterso@uj.edu)**

**Phone: 701-252-3467 ext. 5619**

**Senate Bill 2030**

Chairman Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee my name is Dr. Polly Peterson, President of the University of Jamestown.

I am speaking today neither in favor nor in opposition to SB 2030, but rather to make a simple request: to place an amendment on this bill that adds the foundations of private, North Dakota-based universities as eligible applicants for this program.

The Matching Grant Program began in 2013 and was designed to advance academics at North Dakota institutions of higher learning by matching state dollars with private dollars. It was heralded as a great public-private partnership. The only problem was it left out the private institutions of higher learning.

Let me be clear—we (meaning the University of Jamestown and the University of Mary) jointly asked to be included at that time. The message we received was this: “Wait this round. Come back the next round and it will be easier to be included.” So, we have consistently

communicated our desire to be included in the intervening years, and still, we are waiting.

Why do we want to be included? It is very simple from my perspective. Let me give you one example that drives this home. I had a donor who was very close to providing a substantial gift to the University of Jamestown's foundation. That donor ultimately did not make that gift. The reason: giving that same gift to a public university's foundation leveraged his gift further. The University of Jamestown lost that donation.

We are not on equal footing and as we seek to raise funds from a highly overlapping and interconnected donor base, the University of Jamestown finds itself at a distinct disadvantage.

I have been in communication with Jerome Richter at the University of Mary, and he said they likewise support the request I am making to this committee.

We are asking you to add an amendment to this bill that includes the private universities in this state. This challenge grant program has been marketed as a partnership between the private and public sector. It is good for higher education in North Dakota. We see no reason why the private institution's students should be excluded.

The Matching Grants statute specifically supports the funding of scholarships, thereby eliminating any question regarding the eligibility of private university participation in this program as determined by the Attorney General in September 2005 (opinion 2005-L-24). Therefore, transfers of the Matching Grant funds to a foundation, for the purpose of providing scholarships to private university students are in fact

constitutional and provide a path for private university participation in this program.

The private universities do not receive state funding, so we are here to advocate for our students. We believe funding for higher education in North Dakota should focus on funding students who are residents of North Dakota, and who attend a North Dakota college.

The University of Jamestown has 1200 students in 44 majors, 3 masters and 1 doctoral program. Our retention of students in the state after graduation exceeds 70%. The University of Jamestown has approximately 250 employees and an economic impact in excess of \$80m.

Our students are an integral part of our communities. Between both the University of Jamestown and the University of Mary, our students volunteer over 30,000 hours of service at 200 sites annually.

Students in both communities are helping to meet the labor force needs of our businesses while they are in college and upon graduation. Mary's Leadership Academy and the University of Jamestown's Character in Leadership program have consistently retained students in North Dakota after graduation and both have a long history of graduating talented nurses who are serving in both rural and regional healthcare facilities in our state. Our schools are doing our part to contribute to our economy and our workforce; all with very little state assistance to our students.

Including private university students in the Matching Grant Program is a way to truly make this a public-private partnership. We respectfully request you consider our amendment.

Thank You Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to address any questions you or the committee may have.