

March 10, 2025

Written Testimony in Support of SB 2003 (Challenge Grant Fund)

House Appropriations – Education and Environment Division

Chairman Nathe and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is John Glover, President/CEO of the North Dakota State University Foundation. I am writing to express our enthusiastic support for SB2003, the bill that supports the **North Dakota Higher Education Challenge Grant Fund**. Thank you for your previous support of the Challenge Grant and for the opportunity to provide testimony in the ways NDSU has seen its impact.

Speaking of impact, let's meet **Wyatt Warkenthien**.

Wyatt graduated from NDSU in 2024 with his degree in biotechnology and microbiology and, along with two other NDSU alumni, is co-founding Frontier Bioforge, an agriculture-focused genetic engineering service provider that is calling North Dakota its home.

While attending NDSU, Wyatt was awarded the **President Jim Ozbun Scholarship**, which received matching dollars from the Challenge Grant Fund. Scholarship assistance empowered Wyatt to spend his time participating in numerous extracurricular activities and projects while pursuing his degree.

“I’m a firm believer in the power of experiential learning,” Wyatt said, “and having **access to scholarships gave me flexibility to explore experiences** that might not necessarily be paid but would prepare me for the career I wanted and the goal I had to build my own business.”

Providing students with the ability to not just pursue a degree but to obtain a well-rounded college experience through time devoted to university organizations and programs sets students up for success and provides them with community and networking opportunities, encouraging them to stay in state when pursuing a career.

“I co-founded Frontier Bioforge out of the opportunities I received from my support system in North Dakota. When the state champions its students in the form of scholarships, it allows us **to focus on developing ideas that can turn into North Dakota-grown companies and encourages young professionals like me to plant roots in the state.**”

By providing scholarship support, let's continue to empower students like Wyatt to experience college to the fullest potential.

At the NDSU Foundation, our greatest key performance indicator is the direct support we provide to campus. Since the Challenge Grant began in 2013, more than **625 donors** to NDSU have taken advantage of the matching funds, giving nearly **\$50.5 million** to unlock the state's match at more than **\$25 million**. Most of these funds are invested into our endowment, creating a legacy fund that produces annual spending long into the future. With these Challenge Grant funds, we have sent more than **\$17 million** to campus to support scholarships, faculty, educational infrastructure, and programs.

Our donors love to partner with public dollars to have the most impact on campus, and the Challenge Grant Fund has them lining up at the door. It's a fundraiser's dream to have donors call us first, and that is the environment you created with this program! This partnership reduces financial barriers and burdens for students — helping them to graduate on time, carry smaller or no debt, and after graduation, pursue a career and invest more in their local community. **This could even mean building their own company in North Dakota, just like Wyatt.**

Thank you for considering this opportunity and for your continued service to North Dakota. We stand ready to put your investment to work.

Regards,

John R. Glover
President/CEO
NDSU Foundation