



SB 2223

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Eniola Soetan, North Dakota Student Association

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Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Eniola Soetan, and I am a delegate of the North Dakota Student Association. I am writing to express my support for SB 2223.

The North Dakota Student Association (NDSA) is a student organization established in 1969 that is dedicated to ensuring that students have a voice in policy that affects Higher Education. The NDSA consists of delegates from each of the 11 public institutions that meet monthly to engage students in Higher Education policy in North Dakota. Our mission is to empower students, foster collaboration between students across campuses in the North Dakota University System, and to advocate on issues of higher education in support of access, affordability, quality, and the student experience.

In January, the NDSA passed [NDSA-15-2425: A Resolution in Support of Interstate Licensure Compacts](#), acknowledging the positive impact that interstate licensure compacts can have on access to important services such as dietitians, particularly in more rural areas such as North Dakota.

According to a February 2020 fact sheet published by the University of North Dakota, 17 North Dakota census tracts were considered food deserts, with many more census tracts being considered low access tracts ^[1]. Despite this, as of May 2023, North Dakota had only 170 employed dietitians, with one of the lowest employments per 1,000 rates in the country^[2]. Being an area with lower food access, North Dakota residents should have greater access to dietitians that can provide crucial education and resources for how to achieve nutritional wellbeing, particularly in uniquely rural environments.

In the academic realm, it has been rather well established that balanced nutrition is essential to sufficient focus and memory retention in the classroom, as “students who are chronically hungry tend to earn poorer grades, lower test scores, and have worse graduation outcomes and postsecondary outcomes”^[3].

The interstate licensure compact would allow North Dakotans better access to the incredibly impactful service of dietitians. Access to a dietitian could be the difference between a student who is unable to pay attention and retain information in class, and a student who is able to adequately take in their classroom learning and apply it to the workforce. The nutritional education that dietitians can provide to individuals is not only invaluable, but empowering as well, and should not be virtually inaccessible to North Dakotans.

To support the wellbeing and learning capacity of students in the NDUS and across the state of North Dakota, as well as increase the resources available to NDUS students, I would like to express my support for SB 2223.

[1]- <https://med.und.edu/service/healthcare-workforce/files/docs/2020/sdoh-food-access-fact-sheet-2020.pdf>

[2]- <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes291031.htm>

[3]- <https://www.cmich.edu/news/details/how-important-is-nutrition-to-academic-success>