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February 19, 2025

North Dakota State House Committee on Government and Veterans Affairs
State Capitol Building
600 E. Boulevard Ave.
Bismarck, ND 58505

Dear Members of the North Dakota State House Committee on Government and Veterans Affairs,

I am an enrolled member of the Spirit Lake Tribe, and I am a United States Marine Combat Veteran that participated in the invasion of Iraq in 2003 with the 1st Battalion 7th Marines. I have been a North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance board member since June 2022.

The North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance consists of all 5 tribes in North Dakota. We have worked together to develop tourism experiences that allow visitors to learn our unique histories and listen to the amazing stories of our people. The experiences are educational, emotional and also very entertaining.

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed bill HB 1581, which aims to provide much-needed support for tribal tourism grants in North Dakota. This legislation offers a unique opportunity to further elevate tribal tourism, bringing economic benefits and fostering greater understanding and connection between tribes, local communities, and the state. Tourism has the ability to help our communities grow in a healthy and sustainable way. The more support our reservation gets the better our communities can become. That in turn will equal better relationships with surrounding communities which turns into a better state of North Dakota.

As an entrepreneur who is in the process of developing a glamorous camping site (or "glamping") on tribal lands, I have firsthand experience of the challenges faced when trying to introduce new tourism products into the market, particularly when it comes to access to financing and navigating the complex landscape of land use regulations. The costs involved in bringing these ideas to life are substantial, especially given the barriers around credit access for small businesses, particularly those that involve tribal lands. As such, I am requesting that the Committee consider allocating a portion of the funding from HB 1581 to support small businesses and entrepreneurs who may not always be represented as stakeholders when discussing tribal and state relations.

Many of the issues that entrepreneurs like me face are not simply financial, but also logistical. The intricacies of land-use regulations, coupled with the need for access to credit and lending, often put new ventures at a disadvantage when attempting to navigate the complexities of the tribal and state infrastructure. This makes it extremely difficult to compete with larger, more established entities in the tourism industry. For small businesses, especially those with a focus on sustainable and culturally significant tourism products, the inability to access necessary resources and capital can result in missed opportunities for both economic growth and cross-cultural engagement.

By ensuring that a portion of the funds allocated through HB 1581 be directed towards supporting small business entrepreneurs, we can open doors to innovative, culturally rich tourism ventures that will not only benefit local communities but also provide a diverse and sustainable tourism experience in North Dakota. With the right access to funding, resources, and support, entrepreneurs like me can overcome barriers to market entry, contribute to tribal economic growth, and support the state's tourism efforts in meaningful ways.

I believe that by embracing small businesses as essential partners, the state can create an inclusive, thriving tourism ecosystem that reflects the rich diversity and potential of our tribal lands. I encourage you to consider the inclusion of this provision in HB 1581 and look forward to seeing this bill move forward with the potential to support all stakeholders involved in North Dakota's future growth.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Kenneth J. Graywater Jr

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