

During the summer of 2008, I had the honor of attending North Dakota Governor's School for the Performing Arts, and that is a summer I will carry with me the rest of my life. I was going into my senior year of high school in rural ND and had never really felt like I fit in. I didn't have the opportunity to take AP or dual credit courses, my school could best be described as homogenous, and I was a nerd. I was craving something more. And Governor's School gave it to me.

I went from being the odd duck in a small pond to a very large pond FILLED with odd ducks. It was incredible. I was challenged intellectually and creatively by my instructors and as a human being by my peers. I interacted with people from across the state, from various socio-economic backgrounds, creeds, beliefs, and sexual orientations. I had peers doing cancer research and working on hydrogen fuel cells in their science labs, tackling complex mathematics, and at night we engaged in vigorous debates about ethics, took art classes, and volunteered in the community. To call it transformative would be an understatement.

In fact, that summer impacted me so much that I spent 6 years working with Governor's School each summer, first as an evening fine arts instructor, and then as an RA in the residence halls with the scholars. Working so closely with the program as an adult made me fall even more in love with it. I've had the privilege of watching nearly 400 young people come through the program. We had a saying, "Leave it better than you found it." Typically, this referred to the living space or classrooms, and was a way of reminding the scholars to clean up after themselves, but it was also a constant reminder to our staff, and a promise we made to the parents, that we would leave these scholars better than we found them. Better as students, better as individuals, better as contributing members of our society. And every year, watching the incredible growth that they made throughout the summer, knowing we'd made good on that promise, took my breath away.

In 2019, this program failed to be funded. For two years, its absence has been felt across the state. I was heart-broken to hear that this program had again been cut from the DPI budget. I encourage you to please reconsider. This program is so much more than just another summer camp. It is a life-changing experience that, because of the past dedication to education, has been open to all across the state, regardless of their financial situation. As our nation battles a lack of empathy, unity, and civil discourse, we have a duty to our youth and to their future to educate them and enrich their lives so that we can continue to leave our world better than we found it. This program did that, and we need it back. As you discuss House Bill 1013 today and tomorrow, I urge you to fund North Dakota Governor's School.

Thank you

Rachel Geinert
NDGS Graduate, Class of 2008