



Testimony of Sheri Grossman
Bismarck-Mandan Convention & Visitors Bureau
Senate Bill 2018
March 11, 2021

Bismarck-Mandan
Convention & Visitors Bureau
1600 Burnt Boat Drive
Bismarck, ND 58503
701-222-4308
800-767-3555

Chairman Monson and Members of the House Appropriations – Education and Environment Division:

My name is Sheri Grossman, and I am the CEO for the Bismarck-Mandan Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB).

Sufficient funding for the ND Tourism Division is more important than ever. The pandemic has brought so much devastation to the tourism and hospitality industry.

As the third largest contributor to North Dakota's economy, tourism is a proven revenue generator in all 53 counties. Visitors come to North Dakota for a variety of reasons: to shop, fish, hunt, golf, play or watch a sport, attend an event or convention; the list goes on and on. Whatever the reason, the impact is significant.

All indicators are showing that people want to start traveling again. They will go somewhere; we need to have the funding to inspire them to choose North Dakota. If not, we are letting other states derive the benefits of the economic impact that could benefit our state.

If we have learned anything from this pandemic, it is how much the tourism industry contributes to the economic welfare of our communities in North Dakota. In 2020, Bismarck-Mandan lost over 235 multi-day meetings and events. That is over 168,000 attendees and over \$14.9 million in lost direct expenditures. The lodging tax revenue, which is our major funding source, is down 38%.

The Bismarck-Mandan CVB, like most communities, relies on the Tourism Division to market to leisure travelers. We partner with Tourism on cooperative efforts, making it more affordable for all of us. In addition, by having the Tourism Division do most of the marketing for leisure travelers, we can use more of our CVB marketing dollars to bring in larger conventions and events—allowing all of us to bring in the greatest number of out-of-state visitors and dollars to help stimulate our North Dakota economy. This partnership is more vital than ever.

If you have watched TV these past several months, it is hard to miss the wealth of advertising that we are seeing from South Dakota Tourism. South Dakota Tourism has always had a much larger budget than North Dakota. However, this additional funding influx is of great concern.

It is critical that our Tourism Division has adequate funding to compete with neighboring states. North Dakota cannot continue to let our neighbors capture these visitors and risk losing the economic impact that they could bring to North Dakota. It is imperative to attract this business to fill our hotels, restaurants, gas stations and stores. These businesses suffered so much in 2020.

I hope you will make the commitment to invest our state's resources in the ND Tourism Division a priority. All of North Dakota will reap the benefits.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

