

**Comments to the North Dakota House Appropriations – Education
and Environment Division Committee
Rep. Mike Nathe, Chair**

**Submitted by DeAnna Carlson Zink, CEO of the University of North Dakota
Alumni Association and Foundation**

Submitted January 16, 2023

Chairman Nathe and members of the Committee, my name is DeAnna Carlson Zink and I serve as the CEO of the UND Alumni Association & Foundation. Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony regarding the North Dakota Challenge Fund.

I want to thank each member of the North Dakota Legislature for supporting this initiative in the past. The benefits have been far-reaching—every public college and university in the state has been able to directly impact students earning degrees that set them up for lifelong success.

With this public/private partnership, our donors are teaming with the state to inspire a world of change. Because many of the gifts are put into endowments, the Challenge Fund not only benefits current students, but will continue to shape public higher education in the state into the future.

Since the inception of the challenge fund in 2013, we at the UND Alumni Association and Foundation have utilized our entire \$22 million allocation from the state with \$44 million in gifts and commitments. Two out of every three gifts to the program have come from donors outside the state who want to invest in higher education in the great state of North Dakota.

400 unique donors have taken part in the North Dakota Challenge Fund program at UND. 251 endowments have received funding. That is an incredible impact on thousands of our students; leaders in action who are making a difference in the state, country, and world.

At the University of North Dakota, we have benefited by focusing on the University's strategic priorities and college-based initiatives—especially scholarships, endowed faculty positions, and academic programs. We have leveraged the challenge grant with our donors from all over the country. Here's the thing, donors have been motivated by this program. They've been so motivated, that they've given more than they originally intended once they learned of this public-private partnership. This program has been a tipping point for donors to give back and to give more.

I believe it is important that House Bill 1033 continue to provide funding for the UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences and the UND School of Law. These are unique professional schools within our state with distinctive needs who contribute to the workforce needs of North Dakota.

I urge you to consider the full \$50 million in Governor Burgum's budget for this program. With that level of funding, we'll be able to maximize donor impact and make higher education accessible to students from every walk of life. This is not just an investment in our state, it's an investment in our future.

At the University of North Dakota and the state's other institutions of higher learning, private giving is more important than ever. It is vitally important to have initiatives like this that support academic programs, endowed faculty positions, and scholarships to make colleges and universities accessible to students from every walk of life.

Thank you.

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