

HB 1470

Chair Heinert and Vice Chair Schreiber Beck and fellow members of the House Education Committee.

This afternoon I present HB 1470 to you. This bill currently called the Back to College Grant Program will provide financial assistance grants for individuals returning to college after years of being in the workforce or if they had ceased college with our attaining their degree.

Earlier this session, our committee received several bills advanced from the Higher Education Interim Committee. Representative Sanford presented that package of bills to our committee. The interim committee had been tasked with reviewing scholarship and financial aid programs to determine if there were areas of unmet need or gaps. In our state examples of financial assistance are: Need Based, Academic, Career Tech Scholarships, Dual credit, High need areas (teachers, special ed or nurses) and the Challenge Grants. One other area that was reviewed by the interim committee was financial assistance for students who have ceased enrollment without attaining a degree. HB 1470 has been developed based on the concepts reviewed by the Interim Committee. A similar program has been implemented in the state of Indiana called the “You Can Come Back” Program. HB 1470 is modeled after that but with a few enhancements.

During my career in Higher Education, I specialized in designing “retention efforts and designing programming for first year college students to decrease factors that would cause students to drop out or to stop out of college.

The first category of individual who would be targeted with HB 1470 is the college student who stopped out of their degree program. A variety of reasons could have led to the decision to cease their enrollment.

Financial reasons

Pregnancy or parenthood

Medical conditions or mental health reasons

Death or illness of a family member

Readiness issues/Adulting skills

Poor fit between student and college

Timing.

Another category of individuals targeted would be the individual who did not enter college immediately after high school. There are many reasons that a person may not enroll in college immediately after graduating from HS:

Financial

Direct entry into the workforce—perhaps to work in the Bakken

Personal reasons or readiness issues

After a few years or even after many years in the workforce an individual may desire to attend college as an older than traditional student but may need a bit of financial enticement.

The third category of individuals would be career changers or retired individuals who did not seek a college degree but now are considering college attendance. There is no upper age limit for this Back to College Grant.

The Back to College Program will target each of these groups of individuals and provide a financial grant/stipend to incentivize and to enable individuals to return to college.

In essence this is a fairly simple bill and a system to provide financial assistance to this specific group of residents of the state of North Dakota.

This bill would provide a 1 time \$2500 grant for tuition and fees—approximately 6 credits.

Individuals at least 25 years of age or students who have not attended college for 3 years would be eligible.

The fiscal note for this program is \$1 Million and is based on 400 students obtaining this grant.

The exact policies and procedures to develop, implement, promote and administer this Back to College Grant Program will be adopted by the state board of higher education.

I stand before you for questions.