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**House Bill 1531**  
**House Education Committee**  
**February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee,

For the record, my name is Faith Wahl, and I serve as the Student Body President at the University of North Dakota (UND). I am submitting this testimony in concurrence with Morgan Mastrud, the Student Body Vice President at UND. We are submitting testimony in opposition to HB 1531, including the amendments that were proposed to the committee on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

When considering HB 1531 and the impact that it would have on higher education in North Dakota, we feel that it is important to consider how this bill would negatively impact students both financially and academically. First, several students would lose access to critical financial aid if this bill were to pass. Currently, 1.58 million dollars are allocated to scholarships, grants, or tuition waivers for undergraduate, graduate, law, and medical students that would no longer be awarded based on the implications of the proposed amendments. This financial aid is crucial to student success, particularly in times of great economic need and inflationary periods. The financial aid that students receive positively impacts their life, including areas such as food, housing, books, supplies, and other expenses related to higher education. Removing these key opportunities for students would result in increased financial hardships and create barriers to recruiting and retaining students in North Dakota.

Beyond the serious financial implications that this bill would impose on students, several significant academic programs would be affected as well. These include, but are not limited to, the Indians Into Medicine (INMED) and the Recruitment and Retention of American Indians

Into Nursing (RAIN) programs. Both programs utilize scholarships, grants, and tuition waivers for students intended to fill workforce gaps and target specific populations that are underserved throughout the state. If HB 1531 and the proposed amendments were to pass, students throughout the state and nation would be discouraged from pursuing their education at UND or other colleges in North Dakota. This action would have a negative impact on the future of the state's healthcare workforce and economy.

Finally, HB 1531 and the proposed amendments could adversely affect University foundations and jeopardize relationships with alumni that are willing to give back to an institution. Throughout the state of North Dakota, higher education donors are incentivized to donate to institutions through the Challenge Grant, which provides one dollar of state funding for every two dollars privately donated. This matching program has been incredibly successful in encouraging donors to give back to students through endowments and scholarships. At this time, UND has approximately 50 endowments that directly benefit students with characteristics outlined in the proposed amendments. When individuals choose to donate privately, they are free to identify where and to whom the funds will be allocated. If restrictions are placed on how funds can be distributed and which students are eligible to receive educational funding, private donors may be discouraged from giving money towards an institution. Beyond the loss in private donations that HB 1531 may cause, the loss in Challenge Grant funding that would accompany a decrease in private donations would result in losing millions of dollars in student financial aid. If passed, HB 1531 along with the proposed amendments would severely limit student financial aid, academic programs, and private donations that significantly contribute to student success.

Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee, we respectfully request a Do Not Pass on HB 1531 and the proposed amendments. Thank you for your time, and we are available for any questions that you might have.

Respectfully submitted,

*Faith Wahl and Morgan Mastrud*