

Testimony in Opposition to Proposed Amendments to House Bill 1531

February 8, 2023

My name is Anastassiya Andrianova, and I urge you to vote **DO NOT PASS on HB 1531**.

I speak on my own behalf, not on behalf of North Dakota State University, but I draw on my experience in higher education since 1999, first as an undergraduate student, then as a graduate student and parttime instructor, and finally as a tenure-track and now tenured faculty at NDSU.

If enacted, the amended HB 1531 will prohibit educational costs and waivers of any kind “based on an applicant’s race, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity, or sexual preference.” Why do such programs and forms of assistance exist? Institutions of higher education under the control of the state board of higher education (SBHE) have multicultural diversity assistance programs in order to help recruit and retain multicultural students and especially first-generation and transfer students, who come from underrepresented/minority communities.

If we take multicultural assistance programs away, students will go someplace else, like Minnesota, where they might feel more welcomed and where they are offered better financial assistance packages to meet the rising costs of tuition, books, room and board, and inflation.

Multicultural and diversity waivers and scholarships are *not* “government handouts.” By assisting underrepresented and minority students, institutions under the control of the SBHE fulfill the land grant mission of educating citizens in the state of North Dakota. Plus, many (if not all) such forms of financial assistance come with eligibility criteria beyond being a member of a federally protected class, such as admission, enrollment, and passing grades/cumulative GPA (grade point average).

In his testimony in favor of this bill, Rep. Prichard includes four such scholarships that mean to promote diversity and assist underrepresented minority students with their educational costs: at NDSU, UND, and Minot State. Rep. Prichard claims these are “arbitrary factors.” They are not. Rep. Prichard fails to mention that programs, such as NDSU’s Cultural Diversity Tuition Waiver, also require meeting rigorous admissions standards and holding a certain GPA.

In offering such opportunities, universities under the control of the SBHE want to serve multicultural students and Indigenous students in particular, who come from the traditional lands of the Oceti Sakowin (Lakota, Dakota, Nakota) and other Indigenous Peoples of our land. In my time as a faculty member at NDSU (2014-present), I’ve noticed that we have difficulty recruiting and retaining Indigenous students, and it is multicultural diversity scholarships that help us serve these students and our land grant mission as a public university.

I have personally witnessed how integral tuition assistance and scholarships are for multicultural first-generation students and transfer students. These students are often the first in their family to enter college, the American dream that was not available to their parents and grandparents, but they also often come from households that cannot afford the full cost of college tuition, books, room and board, etc. The same goes for transfer students, who transfer in from community

colleges or other universities to North Dakota because they value our education experience and opportunities, but need some extra financial help and support.

There is a huge problem with student enrollments across the nation, and it is hitting North Dakota, as well. NDSU is already facing a dire budget shortfall of \$7.6 million in this biennium. Every 100 students that we *fail* to recruit and retain cost the institution roughly 1 million dollars (in student credit hours and tuition). The students that we *do* have, we must work hard to retain. This is especially true of multicultural and diverse students who bring a diversity of experience, intellectual diversity, and overall, joy and fun to our campuses. If we can make their educational experience better, this will help not just them but everyone. If these students feel welcomed, if they feel the universities are helping them with whatever costs they can, they will succeed, they will likely also stay in North Dakota, start families, and bolster our economy. And what's the alternative? An exodus of those students out of state. Loss of revenue. A huge loss to everyone.

Therefore, I strongly urge you to **VOTE NO on HB 1531**.

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