



OFFICE of the PRESIDENT

6 March 2023

Dear Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Monsignor James Shea, and I am the President of the University of Mary. Today, I am speaking in favor of the proposed "re-energize North Dakota scholarship," with one amendment request. I would like to propose that the scholarship be opened to students from any institution of higher education in North Dakota. As North Dakota students who are educated in the state, our University of Mary students are critical in filling workforce needs across the state, particularly in the oil and gas industry.

The University of Mary boasts a student body of 3,702 students across 56 majors, 17 master's programs, and 5 doctoral programs. We have a workforce of approximately 527 employees and contribute to the state's economy with an impact exceeding \$206 million. Our students are deeply integrated into our communities during their academic careers and beyond. Moreover, many of our graduates remain in the state after graduation, with many of them graduating with degrees in fields such as engineering, nursing, education, business, and cybersecurity. These graduates are critical in filling high-need areas across the state, including the oil and gas industry and other industries that support communities impacted by North Dakota's energy development. The University of Mary is also finding new ways to help fill the need of four-year higher education in the Bakken as we have a location in Watford City and have opened an office in Williston through our Northwest North Dakota Initiative and MOU agreement with Williston State College. Classes in Williston will begin this summer and will help keep residents in the Bakken and help fill the workforce need in the area.

Given the current workforce challenges in North Dakota, it is important that we prioritize efforts to retain high school students at North Dakota institutions of higher education. Currently, University of Mary students have access to four of North Dakota's seven scholarship offerings, including the ND Academic Scholarship, ND Career and Technical Education Scholarship, ND Scholars Scholarship, and ND Indian Scholarship. We believe that opening up the "re-energize North Dakota scholarship" to students from all North Dakota colleges will further support funding for higher education in the state and benefit students who are residents of North Dakota and attending college in the state.

Please consider the following amendment to page 1, lines 19 and 20, currently provided as follows:

“The educational program must be provided at an institution under the control of the state board of higher education.”

We kindly request that the committee consider replacing the aforementioned language with the following:

“The educational program must be provided at a North Dakota institution of higher learning.”

By making this adjustment, all students in North Dakota will have access to the scholarship.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Msgr. James P. Shea". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Monsignor James P. Shea
President