



SB 2187

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Chair Weisz and Members of the Committee: My name is Katherine Kempel and I am a delegate of the North Dakota Student Association writing to you today in support of SB 2187.

The North Dakota Student Association (NDSA) is dedicated to ensuring that students have a voice at the table in policy that affects higher education. We consist of delegates from each of the 11 public North Dakota University System (NDUS) institutions, meeting monthly to engage students in discussions about North Dakota higher education policy. Since 1969, our mission has been to empower students, create collaboration between the student bodies of the North Dakota public universities, and to provide a student perspective on higher education policy.

The NDSA has a long history of supporting increased access to mental health services for students as evidenced most recently with the passing of NDSA-19-2223: A Resolution in Support of the Establishment of a Counseling Compact, a resolution in direct support of this bill. 88% of out of state students within the NDUS come from states that have either joined this compact or have current pending legislation regarding this compact. At a time when more than 60% of college students meet the criteria for at least one mental health problem while wait times for campus health services continue to increase, this bill is uniquely poised to offer a solution to a growing issue on college campuses.

It is no secret that the transition from high school to college is a difficult time for many students. For first time students, this can be exacerbated by situations such as transitioning to a larger, unfamiliar city and school, learning to live on their own for the first time, and being without close family and friends. To manage this difficult transition, students may choose to seek out professional counseling. However, this can be a more difficult feat for out-of-state students

studying at NDUS institutions. Out-of-state students wishing to continue previously existing relationships with licensed mental health specialists in their home states are not currently able to continue with virtual telehealth appointments with a provider from their home state that they already know and trust while going through a significant change in life. SB 2187 would allow the potential 88% of out-of-state students that stand to benefit from this bill the access they need to navigate a pivotal life transition with a licensed counselor in their home state that they already know and trust.

The establishment of North Dakota within this counseling compact is a step forward in providing higher education students with the necessary access to mental health care that can best suit their needs. Based on the opportunity to provide higher education students with the ability to continue established relationships with counselors from their home state through telehealth options while attending NDUS institutions, the NDSA supports North Dakota's entrance to a multi-state counseling compact. On behalf of the North Dakota Student Association, I respectfully request a DO PASS recommendation of SB 2187.