

March 7, 2023

Honorable Brad Bekkedahl
Senator and Appropriations Committee Chair

Senator Bekkedahl and Members of the Committee:

I'm writing to express my continued and enthusiastic support for the proposed \$50-million Destination Development Fund, as well as—at a minimum—the increased funding for Tourism Marketing included in the Governor's budget. I say "minimum" because the proposed increase would still leave North Dakota well short of the tourism spending done by most of our competitors around the country, including those closest to us. Destination marketers in the state have been asking for the Destination Development Fund since the 2019 session, and see it as even more important today as North Dakota struggles to find people to fill thousands of open jobs. This matching grant fund will support place-making through the enhancement of existing facilities and attractions, as well as to new amenities we haven't even thought of yet. And those developments won't just attract visitors but will also be an incentive for people thinking about moving to the state.

It's well-established that Tourism Marketing lifts the national and international profile of the entire state, including for purposes of economic and workforce development. Very few people ever decide to move to a state to take a job unless they've had a chance to visit, and the visits that influence those decisions don't always come during a specific job search. Sometimes they come during a family vacation, or a trip to a conference, or to a Squirt Hockey Tournament. People who visit ND for any reason whatsoever are far more likely to consider working, living, or starting a business here, and make no mistake about it—*marketing drives the vast majority of the first visits*. You have a great team in the Tourism Division of the Commerce Department, and I believe I can speak for all my travel, tourism, and economic development colleagues around the state when I implore you to give them the tools, and the funds they need to raise North Dakota and all it has to offer to the place it deserves in the national consciousness. I would be delighted to answer any questions, either in person before your committee or via email or a phone call.

Sincerely,



President & CEO

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