

HB1021

Senate Appropriations

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Chair Bekkedahl and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee. My name is Jennifer Weber, and I serve as the Director of Institutional Research for the North Dakota University System. I am here today on behalf of the North Dakota University System and its eleven institutions to provide testimony related to the funding of the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) within HB1021.

The North Dakota University System has been involved in the development and governance of SLDS since its inception in 2007. NDUS has had a voice at the table which has enabled the development of a system with value that has been implemented into our business practices. We are appreciative of the fiscal support that has been provided by the federal government for the past 15 years and acknowledge that a system such as this would not have been implementable without that funding. We also appreciate the support from the North Dakota legislature, by establishment of century code that has enabled state agencies to do this work.

I mentioned that SLDS has become part of our business practices. Primarily, SLDS is used by NDUS to respond to information requests that cross agency lines, for instance, the college outcomes of North Dakota high school graduates, or the workforce outcomes of NDUS graduates. While we respond to requests from a variety of entities, the primary use of the SLDS data is to respond to questions posed by the state legislature, either during the bi-annual session or for interim legislative committees. We also regularly field questions from the Governor's Office. Here are some examples of SLDS research we have provided:

- During COVID, the enrollment rate of North Dakota high school graduates enrolling into NDUS was the lowest observed in a decade (ND High School Graduate Enrollment Report, Dec 2020)
- When looking at freshmen college courses (English 110/Math 103), students who take CREAM (College Ready English & Math) courses in high school perform as well as students who participate in traditional developmental courses in college. (College Ready English and Math (CREAM) effectiveness study, June 2022)
- 45.2% of North Dakota high school students have taken a dual credit course in NDUS by the time they graduate high school. The average student takes 3-4 dual credit courses. (Dual Credit Study, January 2023)
- Of the annual NDUS Nursing graduates, nearly 500 originated from an out of state high schools and 50% of those out of state originators are still in North Dakota 5 years after college graduation. (Out-of-State Nursing Students, February 2021)

- Of students who receive a North Dakota academic or CTE scholarship, over 90% are still in North Dakota one year post college graduation, and over 50% are still in state at 10 years post. These retention rates are higher than for those who do not receive scholarships. (ND Scholarship Summary, November 21, 2022)

In addition to the ability to perform cross agency research, which we emphasize is conducted quickly, and without the need for data sharing agreements which expose PII, SLDS provides other valuable services to NDUS and our stakeholders:

- The [NDInsights](#) dashboard provides up to date information on NDUS Colleges, their Degree and Program offerings, program enrollment & graduation headcounts, and subsequent in-state workforce outcomes for graduated students.
- NDInsights also provides a comprehensive look at dual credit enrollments, providing dual credit headcounts by high school & college, as well as enrollments by course.
- ETranscripts has been implemented, providing North Dakota high school students the ability to submit official transcripts to NDUS institutions electronically.
- SLDS provides the data needed for the implementation of the North Dakota Academic and CTE Scholarship programs, both in terms of identifying and monitoring students who qualify.

The working relationships among the agencies involved in SLDS are strong. SLDS is the tool used to provide timely and data-based responses to education and workforce questions that cannot be responded to by a single agency without a large investment in staff time, data sharing agreements, and sharing PII data across agencies. One of SLDS most outstanding aspects, is that it works so well. However, this is also the crux of concern, as often when things are working well, they go unnoticed, which can be mistaken for things not happening. NDUS desires to make it clear that SLDS is an integral part of our function, and we see a transition to state funding to support the system as critical.

Stated most simply, SLDS is a beautiful thing. The investment of time, work, and federal dollars has created a system for our state that is quite frankly, the envy of other states. Our focus on K-12, university system, and workforce enables data connections unimaginable in its absence. But we are currently at a crossroad. With the loss of federal funding for ongoing maintenance and development for SLDS, our legislature must determine the fiscal value of maintaining and expanding the SLDS system. This work cannot continue without appropriate levels of funding. NDUS desires the continuation of SLDS. Additionally, NDUS is interested in exploring expansions of the warehouse, specifically in the arenas of predictive analytics for student success, and federal reporting.

This concludes my testimony related to HB1021. I respectfully request that this committee consider the ask for additional SLDS funding and will stand for questions from Committee members.