

**Comments to the North Dakota Senate Appropriations Committee  
Senator Brad Bekkedahl, Chair**

**Submitted by DeAnna Carlson Zink, CEO of the University of North Dakota  
Alumni Association and Foundation**

**Submitted March 3, 2023**

Chairman Bekkedahl and members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit testimony regarding the North Dakota Challenge Fund.

I have been asked today by Chancellor Mark Hagerott to testify on behalf of all the state's university and college foundations. I am honored to fulfill this role as our foundations all have the same mission: to ensure our students have the very best possible experiences and are primed to meet the workforce challenges of the future.

I want to thank each member of the North Dakota Legislature for supporting the challenge fund in the past as the benefits have been far-reaching. Over the past ten years, \$74 million in state dollars have inspired \$148 million in donor gifts for a \$222 million impact across North Dakota's colleges and universities. Countless students have been helped by the generosity shown by our donors and you, our state legislators.

With this public/private partnership, our donors are teaming with the state to inspire a world of change. Because many of the gifts are put into endowments, the Challenge Fund not only benefits current students, but will continue to shape public higher education in the state into the future.

At the University of North Dakota, two out of every three gifts to the program have come from donors outside the state who want to invest in higher education in the great state of North Dakota. Other foundations report similar engagement from out-of-state donors.

Here's the bottom line, donors have been motivated by this program. They've been so motivated that they've given more than they originally intended once they learned of this public-private partnership. This program has been a tipping point for donors to give back.

Ty Orton at Dickinson State says their Heritage Foundation, though only six years old, has been able to grow to provide more than \$1 million in scholarships annually. He says the challenge grant was a major factor in that achievement.

These success stories can be found across the state: The UND Foundation has set fundraising records in three of the past four years, Minot State has seen record fundraising, NDSU successfully completed a capital campaign, all thanks to the strong foundation provided by this vital program.

We are so thankful for the flexibility that is included in HB 1003; it is important since each of our institutions has different priorities on a year-to-year basis. I urge you to consider the maximum funding possible for the challenge fund. This is not just an investment in our state, it's an investment in our future.

At the University of North Dakota and the state's other institutions of higher learning, private giving is more essential than ever. It is vitally important to have initiatives like this that support academic programs, endowed faculty positions, and scholarships to make colleges and universities accessible to students from every walk of life.

Thank you.

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