

Chairman Roers and members of the Senate State and Local Government Committee,

Hello, my name is Kim Konikow, and I am Executive Director of North Dakota Council on the Arts (NDCA). I am here to speak about Senate Bill 2338, introduced by Sen. Krebsbach, Sen. Burckhard, Rep. Nelson, Sen. Piepkorn, Rep. Roers Jones, and Sen. Veda regarding the State Poet Laureate position.

North Dakota Council on the Arts fully supports SB 2338. Having the next Poet Laureate be named as Denise Lajimodiere is truly wonderful (SCR 4002). Her stature in the Native community, as a poet and writer, and as a woman is an important follow-up to the prior Poet Laureate.

As the Agency assigned for the pass through of funds related to the Poet Laureate position, NDCA requests that a structure be in place to support this position. SB 2338 addresses this.

First and foremost, it is recommended that the Poet Laureate position have a term limit. In keeping with the majority of other states we recommend two years. This would also align the position with the State's Biennial system.

When someone is offered a position, it is important that an outline of responsibilities be clearly stated. The goal is to help the candidate be successful. It is recommended that the Poet Laureate conduct four public events per fiscal year in ND. This could be a variety of public presentations or teaching opportunities that help to elevate poetry throughout the state.

There are funds already associated with this position at \$10,000 per biennium. NDCA was designated as the fiscal passthrough and overseer of fund distribution. We utilize an annual MOU on behalf of the state. NDCA suggests a request for funds be submitted following participation in the four events mentioned above. It would also be helpful to receive a program from these events, with a bit of data on the participants. This valuable information demonstrates outreach to NDCA's Federal funder, the National Endowment for the Arts.

How the Poet Laureate is selected could be managed by a diverse committee in spring prior to each new biennium. A suggestion would be to have a variety of qualified people fill this post, perhaps those already named as Poet Laureate Associates...they are a highly capable and experienced group! Denise Lajimodiere has been an ND Associate Poet Laureate for many years.

NDCA strongly supports the post of a ND Poet Laureate; poetry uplifts us in so many ways. We would like to see this position be far-reaching and *more available to all ND citizens*. NDCA is fully in favor of SB2338.

Respectfully,



Some background:

We are one of 50 states and several territories, part of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. Of these, 46\* have a Poet Laureate, either by Gubernatorial appointment, or selected by panel through the state humanities or arts councils; very few are named by a Legislative body. There are a variety of term limits, responsibilities, and payments, ranging from 2- 6 years {with only three in perpetuity}.

This is an honorary post which promotes reading, writing and an appreciation of poetry. Most of the Poet Laureates have published a book, have a long history of their writing appearing in publications, and have received recognitions and honors. They are often involved in State speeches, conventions, inaugural celebrations, and other opportunities designed to inspire, encourage, and educate. On occasion they are asked to specifically write poetry for a state event.

In North Dakota there has been a named Poet Laureate since 1957, including Corbin A Waldron. Henry R. Martinson and Lydia O. Jackson were named Associate Poet Laureates. Larry Woiwode was designated the ND Poet Laureate for life in 1985, and in 1995, SCR 4039 was attached to the appointment for \$10,000 per biennium.

Mr. Woiwode passed away last spring, 37 years into his tenure. During 2004-2019 he named 12 Associate Poet Laureates. They are:

- Jamie Parsley –Fargo
- Rick Watson - Minot
- Dave Solheim - Dickinson, Bismarck
- Shadd Piehl - Minot, Mandan
- Madelyn Camrud – Grand Forks, Fargo
- Rick Watson – Mott, Minot
- Heid Erdrich – MN, Wahpeton
- Louise Erdrich – MN, Wahpeton
- Denise Lajimodiere – Belcourt – currently passed by SCR 4002
- Warren Sturlaugson - Bismarck
- Mark Vinz – Born ND, Moorhead
- Ron Vossler – Wishek, Grand Forks
- Bonnie Larson Staiger, Bismarck