

Agriculture Committee Hearing

February 6th, 2025

HB 1529- Testimony in Support

Dear Chair Beltz and members of the Agriculture Committee,

My name is Zoe Absey, and I am writing in strong support of HB 1529. As a returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV) (Rwanda, 2017–2019), I know firsthand how important it is to have opportunities to further your education after completing service. When I finished my time in the Peace Corps, I chose to pursue my master's degree at Boston College because they offered scholarships specifically for RPCV's. Due to the pandemic and doing my masters online, I have stayed in North Dakota and used the skills I learned in the Peace Corps in a variety of roles such as working for the Great Plains Food Bank, creating food access across the state and currently at the YWCA Cass Clay making sure we provide adequate shelter and housing to those that are fleeing violence and experiencing homelessness.

Providing resident student tuition for returned Peace Corps Volunteers would not only help those of us who have dedicated years to international service access affordable education, but it would also attract talented, mission-driven individuals to North Dakota. Peace Corps Volunteers are known for being adaptable, innovative, ambitious, and deeply committed to community service—qualities that align with North Dakota's values and workforce needs. Offering this opportunity could encourage RPCVs to stay in the state long-term, contributing their skills and passion to local communities, businesses, and public service.

I urge you to support HB 1529 and recognize the value that returned Peace Corps Volunteers bring to North Dakota.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony,

Zoe Absey