



HB 1128

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Chair Heinert and members of the committee: my name is Christopher Scott, and I am the current Policy, Advocacy and Research Director for the North Dakota Student Association. I am here to express the NDSA's support for HB 1128.

The North Dakota Student Association (NDSA) is a student organization established in 1969 that is dedicated to ensuring that students have a voice in policy that affects Higher Education. The NDSA consists of delegates from each of the 11 public institutions that meet monthly to engage students in Higher Education policy in North Dakota. Our mission is to empower students, foster collaboration between students across campuses in the North Dakota University System, and to advocate on issues of higher education in support of access, affordability, quality, and the student experience.

In the past year, NDUS institutions have raised concerns about the quality of residence halls across the University System. Many of these residence halls were built during the 1960s and 1970s and have seen few, if any major, renovation over the last several decades. As a result, these buildings have aged and have begun to develop a multitude of issues. However, NDUS institutions have had few options in ways to acquire funding to renovate these halls as state funds allocated by the state cannot be used for auxiliaries such as student dining and housing.

In response to these concerns, the NDSA passed [NDSA-02-2425](#): A Resolution in Support of Appropriating State Funds for the Improvement of On-Campus Housing. This resolution highlights 4 major issues that most NDUS institutions have with campus housing: deferred maintenance, building capacity, building security, and student housing needs. The poor condition

of residence halls has affected NDUS recruitment efforts, since many of these buildings are no longer enticing to incoming students. At the present time, most NDUS institutions require students to live in on-campus housing throughout their first year.

Additionally, many of these older residence halls have raised concerns for safety and security. Many of the older NDUS residence halls have little to no security measures and have fewer cameras compared to academic buildings, all of which create a security risk for students.

These issues are not new. During the last legislative session, I served as the NDSA President and in this role I had the opportunity to visit all eleven NDUS colleges and universities. I have seen firsthand the conditions of many of the old residence halls across the NDUS. During these visits, there were comments to the NDSA Executive Team about the conditions of the residence halls from students across the NDUS.

In addition to this, during my time at Minot State University, I lived on campus for 3 years in their residence halls. When I first came to Minot State, I purposely chose a suite-style residence over a community-style residence hall due to the age and the conditions of the community-style residence halls that were older and in worse condition compared to the suite-style residence halls. During my time there, Minot State shut down one of their residence halls, Dakota Hall, due to the age and the ongoing issues in the building. The residence hall that I had lived in at the time experienced plumbing issues and would often cause rooms to be flooded. Minot State had looked at doing major renovations to Cook Hall, one of their community style residence halls, but then backed away due to discovering that if the building was to be renovated, it would need to also be brought up to the current building code. This added a million dollars to the cost of renovation.

One of the other NDSA delegates, Connor Mumaw of NDSCS wanted to add some comments to this testimony and is quoted as follows “I am an SRA in Nordgaard Hall at NDSCS and there are residence halls that need repair. We have two resident halls sitting empty and vacant on our campus because they have asbestos, and nothing could be done with them because it would be too expensive. During a spring move in, Nordgaard Hall had 1 of our elevators break twice in 1 day. Robertson Hall has no air conditioning, and during September the heat caused a girl to overheat and have a seizure. Nordgaard hall had extremely touchy fire alarms and go off at least once a month. There are no cameras in the stairwell, which means we cannot catch any incidents in the stair well and when I asked about the idea of putting them in the stair wells, they said it

would be too expensive. In Robertson the doors are weak enough where you can pull it hard, they will open without scanning your card. The electrical system in Robertson runs on fuses that are so old it is out of code. There are very few security cameras that overlook our resident hall parking lots and if there is a camera that faces that lot, we would be lucky if it works. My car was keyed and defaced with awful slurs with dirt and nothing was done because there was no camera facing it. We had a fight in Robertson which when we went to investigate it, we found there were only 2 cameras that caught it because 4 other cameras didn't work. There are no PA speakers to announce emergencies in Walton and Schultz Halls. The freight elevator in Walton Hall is so old that no one knows how to work on them, and it breaks down frequently and needs to be renovated. The plumbing in Walton Hall needs renovations because the drains clog and flood the hall and least once per year”.

HB 1128 gives institutions another option to use when looking at renovating residence halls and other auxiliaries, would improve NDUS recruitment efforts, offer better living conditions for students in the residence halls and would increase the overall quality of student life for students living on campus. However, HB 1128 presently only allows for 25 million dollars from the Bank of North Dakota for loans to update auxiliaries, thus limiting the benefits of HB 1128. And so, while the NDSA supports HB 1128, we also would like to ask for an increased overall loan limit for this bill, to allow more opportunity for more auxiliaries to be updated, increasing HB 1128's overall positive impact. And so, for the above reasons, on behalf of the NDSA, I would ask for a DO PASS recommendation on this bill from the committee.