

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

I am Brent Sanford and it's my great fortune to be president of Bismarck State College, North Dakota's Polytechnic Institution. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today in support of House Bill 1128, which seeks to create a Higher Education Infrastructure Revolving Loan Fund.

This bill is critical for ensuring that our higher education institutions can continue to provide the best possible environment for learning, growth, and community. As our institutions grow and evolve, so too must the facilities that support them, particularly our student residence halls. House Bill 1128 addresses the pressing need for investments in these critical spaces, and I stand before you today to outline why this bill is essential.

First and foremost, the bill proposes a revolving loan fund specifically designed to support the construction of new residence halls and the repair of existing ones. Residence halls are the heart of our campuses, providing students with safe and living spaces that are integral to their academic success. Yet, as many of us know, maintaining and improving these facilities comes with a significant cost.

Inflation has been rising, and with it, the cost of construction materials and repair services. The longer we wait to address these issues, the more expensive they become to fix. Without timely action, we risk compromising the safety of our students. House Bill 1128 proposes a proactive and efficient solution to address these rising costs by establishing a fund that will allow institutions to access affordable loans to make necessary repairs and improvements, while also allowing for the construction of new student housing to meet increasing demand.

Moreover, by providing a sustainable revolving loan fund, we are creating a financial mechanism that will continue to support our institutions over time. As loans are repaid, funds will be replenished and available for future projects, creating a long-term solution to address our institutions' ongoing needs.

The impact of this bill extends beyond the walls of residence halls—it is an investment in our state's economy. By supporting the construction and repair of college housing, we are creating jobs, stimulating local economies, and ensuring that our institutions remain competitive in the ever-changing landscape of higher education.

I urge all of you to support House Bill 1128. It is a smart, sustainable, and forward-thinking solution to a problem that impacts the success of our students and the growth of our higher education institutions. Let us invest in our future and provide our students with the resources they need to succeed.

Thank you.