



January 20, 2025

Senate Appropriations
Education and Environment Division
600 East Boulevard
Bismarck, ND 58505

RE: Support for an increase in non-beneficiary funding in SB 2003

Good afternoon, Chair Sorvaag and Members of the Appropriations Education and Environment Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity present this testimony on behalf of the North Dakota Tribal College System. My name is Dr. Tracey Bauer, and I have the honor of serving as the Executive Director of the North Dakota Tribal College System. I want to express my strong support for increasing non-beneficiary funding for North Dakota's Tribal Colleges, as this funding provides us the opportunity to continue providing a high-quality education to all students.

The five institutions that comprise the North Dakota Tribal College System serve as critical access points for higher education within our tribal communities. Further, North Dakota Tribal Colleges are instrumental in fostering economic development, improving workforce readiness, and supporting lifelong learning opportunities within their regions. Recently, the North Dakota Tribal College System released our system-wide Economic Impact Study, the study found that from 2022-2023 Tribal Colleges added \$169.5 million to North Dakota's economy, the equivalent of supporting 2,106 jobs. For every dollar invested in Tribal Colleges, taxpayers receive \$1.30 in return. This data proves how valuable Tribal Colleges are to all of North Dakota. North Dakotans benefit from the money Tribal Colleges bring to and keep in North Dakota, particularly within our rural communities.

The North Dakota Tribal College System Board of Directors has continued to work collaboratively for the past 30 years to develop meaningful partnerships to advance the work of our Tribal Colleges. In recent years, programming that has resulted because of this collective effort includes the FARMS initiative, the Tribal College Apprenticeship Program (TCAP), and the North Dakota Tribal Digital Literacy program among others.

The financial support provided by the state is essential for our continued success, and increased funding will allow us to expand academic programs, improve infrastructure, and provide critical student services, including mental health support, housing assistance, and career development resources.

Specifically, we are requesting an additional \$200,000 to bring the non-beneficiary funding to \$1.6 million for North Dakota's Tribal Colleges. While Tribal Colleges primarily serve Native American students, a growing number of non-beneficiary students are seeking educational opportunities within the North Dakota Tribal College System. These students often come from surrounding rural communities, and Tribal Colleges are sometimes their most accessible or affordable option for higher education within their region. By supporting non-beneficiary students, the state of North Dakota reinforces its commitment to providing a high-quality education for all residents. This investment will help ensure the sustainability of North Dakota's Tribal Colleges and ensure they are able to maintain their critical role in community development and workforce preparation.

In closing, I'd like to thank you for your time and for your continued support of the North Dakota Tribal College System.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

Respectfully,

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