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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. My name is Dr. Tomi Kay Phillips and I serve as the President of Sitting Bull College, a proud member of the North Dakota Tribal College System (NDTCS). Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the vital role our institution plays in supporting Native American students and communities across North Dakota. I also want to express my strong support for increasing non-beneficiary funding for Tribal Colleges. This funding is crucial to ensuring that we can continue to provide high-quality education to all students, including those who are not members of federally recognized tribes but still seek educational opportunities at our institutions.

At Sitting Bull College, we are deeply committed to providing quality education, preserving Native culture and traditions, and fostering economic development in the communities we serve. Our institution offers a variety of programs tailored to meet the unique needs of our students, ranging from vocational training and certificate programs to associate degrees in key fields such as education, healthcare, and environmental sciences.

Our students come from diverse backgrounds, with many facing unique challenges, including socioeconomic barriers, geographical isolation, and limited access to resources. Despite these challenges, our graduates go on to make meaningful contributions to their communities. For example, many of our graduates become employees of our college so in effect we are growing our own. One of our students received her Masters in Business Administration from Sitting Bull College and is now our Dean of Students.

The financial support provided by the state is essential for our continued success. 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 increase to the non-beneficiary funding from 1.4 to 1.6 million, which will help us address student recruitment and retention, and completion for our Non Native students.

Like many tribal colleges, we face challenges such as aging facilities, limited access to technology, and the need for culturally relevant curriculum. However, with increased state support, we can implement solutions that will not only address these challenges but also ensure that our students are well-prepared for the workforce and for leadership roles within their communities.

In closing, I would like to reiterate the importance of investing in tribal colleges. Our institutions are not just places of learning; they are pillars of our communities, preserving culture, driving economic growth, and creating opportunities for future generations. We greatly appreciate your consideration of our funding request and your ongoing support.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



Dr. Tomi Kay Phillips
President
Sitting Bull College