

## **Written Testimony in Support of the North Dakota Challenge Grant**

Presented to the ND Senate Appropriations Committee– Education and Environment Division

Submitted by: Jo Burdick RN, MSN, North Dakota State University (NDSU) College of Health and Human Sciences Nursing Alumni Advisory Board, NDSU Alumni Foundation Board of Directors, Development and Alumni Awards Committee member and NDSU Executive Governing Board member.

January 21, 2025

Dear Chairman Sorvaag and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Jo Burdick, and I am a nursing graduate of NDSU. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the North Dakota Higher Education Challenge Grant Fund.

**Governor Kelly Armstrong is proposing \$50 million be invested in the next biennium for the program, and as a stakeholder in North Dakota State University and the future of North Dakota, I strongly support this request.**

NDSU has a significant impact on the State of North Dakota's workforce and economy in both rural and urban areas of our state. NDSU graduates are critical to the needs of our state and continue to provide the agricultural, engineering, energy, health care and technology graduates that fuel the workforce in industries across North Dakota. To continue to fulfill this mission it requires increased and consistent investment in the North Dakota University System.

With matching funds provided by donors, a \$50 million investment from the state will drive **\$150 million** of investment over the next two years. As more and more competing programs in neighboring states become available to students it is imperative we encourage and assist students who enroll and stay in the North Dakota University System. We know these dollars also provide the impetus for students to live and work in North Dakota once they graduate from a North Dakota university. In addition to student scholarships, we know the dollars also support educational programs, research, infrastructure, technology, as well as endowed professorships, chairs, and deans. As Governor Armstrong has stated, this program is “**a proven tool**” that ensures North Dakota students stay in North Dakota schools.

In recent years I have personally taken advantage of the North Dakota Challenge Grant to enhance numerous scholarships for nursing students. This is especially important knowing that the majority of NDSU nursing graduates remain and work in North Dakota following graduation.

The Challenge Grant provides great incentive for donors to contribute to their university of choice. Since the Challenge Grant began in 2013, more than 625 individual and corporate benefactors have taken advantage of the matching funds, investing nearly **\$50.5 million**. Strengthening the Challenge Grant in a more robust manner will lead to increased benefits and returns on the investment North Dakota needs from its higher education institutions. I'll be in line to capitalize on these available funds, as I know many others will, once available.

I urge this committee to fund the Challenge Grant at an unprecedented level and challenge the private sector to respond. I'm confident they will. This investment is not an expenditure; it is a commitment to North Dakota and our future workforce.

Thank you for considering this opportunity and for your continued service to North Dakota.

NDSU stands ready to put your investment to work.

Regards,

Jo Burdick  
MSN, RN