

**SB 2147**

January 22, 2025

Joshua L Hansen, North Dakota Student Association

(701)318-6227 | joshua.hansen@ndsu.edu

Chair Elkin and Members of the Committee: My name is Joshua L Hansen, and I am the Director of Governmental Affairs for the North Dakota student association. I am here today in support of Senate Bill: 2147.

The North Dakota Student Association (Hereby referred to as the 'NDSA') is dedicated to ensuring that students have a voice at the table in policy that affects higher education. We consist of delegates from each of the 11 public North Dakota University System (NDUS) institutions, meeting monthly to engage students in discussions about North Dakota higher education policy. Since 1969, our mission has been to empower students, create collaboration between the student bodies of the North Dakota public universities, and to provide a student perspective on higher education policy.

In the course of our previous few years, the NDSA passed [NDSA-01-2425](#): A Resolution in Support of the NDSA's Legislative Priorities for the 25-27 Biennium, and [NDSA-01-2324](#): A Resolution In Support of Affordable Higher Education. Both resolutions detail the NDSA's hopes that our students will continue to be supported through the financial means of the state. Wherein we take a stance of "Incentivizing students to attend NDUS institutions by increasing the affordability of the NDUS through supporting scholarships and grants comparable to others in the region and to workforce needs." There are many barriers to our students that are not limited to just the affordability of school but, alleviating the core problem would go a long way to helping students who have other financial issues and must choose between their studies and something as simple as eating or paying rent. This \$12.2M appropriation for grants would go a long way, not only for giving students a leg up in their higher education but also serves as an

investment by the state in its potential future professional workforce.

During the last five years, our students and our workforce have faced many challenges navigating the new landscape of education brought in by inflation and the recent pandemic. This could be stabilized by continuing to incentivize students in high-demand fields with the proposed loan repayment program that is being slated to continue. Not only does this alleviate the stress of deciding on investment in higher education but the proposed amendments to the ongoing program will also attract students from our neighboring borders to join our university system and possibly our workforce.

We at the NDSA would like to stress our support for the state of North Dakota to continue to increase the affordability of higher education and the appropriations in this bill would accomplish just that. We have long held the stance that “decreased enrollment rates in higher education will harm the economy of North Dakota in the long-term” Any spending on scholarships, loan repayment programs, and grants goes a long way to creating a more diverse and professional workforce by expanding the accessibility of higher education. This will stem any decreases in statewide enrollment rates and secure a better future for not only the higher educational system but the state as a whole.

With all of this considered, on behalf of the NDSA, I ask this committee to give SB 2147 a **DO PASS** recommendation.