



NORTH DAKOTA

Family Alliance LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Testimony Opposing Senate Bill 2376

Jacob Thomsen, Policy Analyst
North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action
February 5, 2025

Madam Chair Larson and honorable members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action is testifying in opposition to Senate Bill 2376 and respectfully requests that you render a “DO NOT PASS” on this bill.

This bill would establish the first casino built in a major city in North Dakota which isn’t located on tribal land. Our organization is ardently opposed to the expansion of gambling in our state, because of the cost it has on the people of North Dakota.

The main issue we have with this bill is associated with compulsive gambling disorders. According to the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, around 3 percent of North Dakotans struggle with compulsive gambling¹, which means around 23,517 North Dakotans have a problem with gambling that harms them and their family. These numbers exist *without* a casino in a major city. These numbers will undoubtedly increase with a casino being in Grand Forks, especially considering that UND hosts 15,000 students merely 6 minutes away from the proposed location of this casino.

According to CollegeGambling.org, “Research has shown that teenagers and college-aged young adults are more impulsive and at higher risk for developing gambling disorders than adults,” and “research estimates that 6 percent of college students in the U.S. have a serious gambling problem that can result in psychological difficulties, unmanageable debt and failing grades.”² That would be equivalent to roughly 900 students³ at the University of North Dakota.

¹ KX News, *How Can You Fight Gambling Addictions in North Dakota?* (2025), <https://www.kxnet.com/news/top-stories/how-can-you-fight-gambling-addictions-in-north-dakota/#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20ND%20department%20of%20Health,of%20North%20Dakotans%20struggle%20with%20compulsive%20gambling.>

² College Gambling, Inc. (n.d.). *Gambling disorders among college students*. College Gambling. <https://www.collegegambling.org/cg-information/fact-sheet-gambling-disorders-among-college-students#:~:text=Research%20has%20shown%20that%20teenagers,gambling%20at%20an%20early%20age.>

³ 6% of 15,000 (Fall 2024 enrollment at UND)

It is also important to note that students have a high probability of using student loans or financial aid money to gamble.⁴ Adding a casino just minutes away from our state's largest university would be a big mistake. If this bill were to pass, we should be sure to include money for building a facility in Grand Forks solely for counseling to deal with the issue of problem gambling.

I am originally from Thompson, North Dakota, just a few minutes south of Grand Forks. I cannot speak for everyone, but I know there is strong pushback against this proposition from the community of Grand Forks and the surrounding areas. I feel I can confidently say that there are many people in this community that do not want this casino in their backyard. In a quote from the Grand Forks Herald, "Building an American Indian casino in Grand Forks has been discussed for two decades, but plans 'died out because of lack of support on city and state levels.'"⁵

There has been discussion on proposed economic benefits to the city, but the cost to the citizens, college-aged or otherwise, is severe. It has been found that low-income households gamble at a rate of 100% more than that of the general population.⁶ The low-income population is at around 16.3%,⁷ meaning that around 9,600 people⁸ in Grand Forks alone will be at higher risk of losing their money on games of chance, rather than spending this money on daily necessities, further exacerbating their financial situation.

Adding a casino near a major city in North Dakota sets a precedent for all the other major cities. This has the potential to radically expand gambling in our state, which we see as a major problem as it can drastically increase problem gambling in our state. We ought to encourage our citizens toward financial security and responsibility, rather than encourage wild spending on games of chance. Because of these reasons, North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action respectfully requests that you render a "DO NOT PASS" on this bill.

⁴ Intelligent.com. (2024, October 18). More than 1 in 6 college students used financial aid, student loans on gambling. *Intelligent.com*. <https://www.intelligent.com/more-than-1-in-6-college-students-used-financial-aid-student-loans-on-gambling/#:~:text=More%20Than%201%20in%205%20College%20Students%20Have%20Used%20Financial,have%20you%20used%20to%20gamble?>

⁵ Wenzel, K. (2025, February 2). Bill seeks to open path for casino project in Grand Forks. *Grand Forks Herald*. <https://www.grandforksherald.com/business/bill-seeks-to-open-path-for-casino-project-in-grand-forks>

⁶ Problem Gambling Awareness Month. (2022). *Problem gambling awareness month brochure* [PDF]. Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling. <https://wi-problemgamblers.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/PGAM-Brochure-Updated-2022.pdf>

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). Grand Forks city, North Dakota: QuickFacts. *U.S. Census Bureau*. Retrieved February 3, 2025, from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/grandforkscitynorthdakota/PST045224>

⁸ 16.3% of 58,921 (Population of Grand Forks as of July 2023)

1515 Burnt Boat Dr., Suite C-148, Bismarck, ND 58503

jacob@ndfamilyalliance.org

701-355-6425

www.ndfamilyalliance.org

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,

Jacob Thomsen
Policy Analyst
North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action