



**SB 2239**

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Chair Wobbema and Members of the Committee: My name is Joshua L Hansen, and I am Director of Governmental Affairs for the NDSA. I am here today in support of SB 2239.

The North Dakota Student Association 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.

During our current year, the NDSA passed its legislative priorities for the biennium (see [NDSA-01-2425](#)), including a legislative priority to support “*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*”. We see SB 2239 with its focus on incentivizing and rewarding excellent students in trade areas that are identified as needed by the state of North Dakota as in line with our wishes detailed in this resolution.

A strong workforce in all areas is needed to make a cohesive economy that functions at every level from trades professions that this bill focuses on, all the way up to research level jobs. Our students include those at our 2-year institutions who have quality trades programs that could use this help. As a graduate from a 2-year school that moved onto 4-year programs, I spent time as President of that college’s student body listening to the concerns of a side of the building that felt isolated and forgotten. I cannot say that it is the same here, but there needs to be a focus on the

great and necessary work that these students do. This \$1.2M would go a long way to telling the students in our trade program that they are valued, that we at the government are keeping our eyes on them, our support with them.

Something that I have learned through my life is that even a little bit of support can help someone find their own feet. By giving the incentive to excellence and pride in their programs, this grant will ease the economic rigors that come along with studying. Trades programs end up having tools and equipment costs beyond the textbooks and manuals that they require to finish their school. The \$1,000 ceiling on this bill in grant money would help alleviate these problems and allow our students an easier course to join our workforce.

Considering this information and in support of our students across the state, on behalf of the North Dakota Student Association, I urge this committee to give this bill a **DO PASS** recommendation.