

**Testimony Prepared for North Dakota Youth Council Report  
Workforce Interim Legislative Committee  
September 27, 2010**

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, for the record my name is Kayla Effertz, and I am a Senior Policy Advisor for the Governor. I am here today to provide the report of issues and recommendations of the North Dakota Youth Council.

The members of the Youth Council were announced last October in conjunction with the announcement of the Youth Forward initiative.

16 young people were selected from recommendations from teachers, principals, legislators, 4-H and state officers from Career & Technical Education organizations such as FFA, FBLA, DECA and the North Dakota Young Professionals network for the council. The members of the council represent high school students, college students and young professionals. 4 legislators were also appointed by the majority and minority leaders of both the houses including Representative Mock, Representative Karls, Senator Bakke and Senator Flakoll.

The brand Youth Forward was launched to gather feedback and create a common thread for the efforts made towards youth retention. The Council has also served as a sounding board for the work of the Youth Office.

The Council split themselves into 4 subcommittees of: education, job opportunities, recreation/entertainment; and health/wellness & safety and the report have also split the recommendation categories accordingly. Each subcommittee met numerous times via to further refine their thoughts and also went to various student organizations to ask for additional input.

As the Council dug into the issues that face young people under the age of 25, members identified recommendations that may be more appropriate for communities, state agencies or the board of higher education to address. Almost every issue takes multiple stakeholders to advance therefore they felt it was important to include all issues in the report. Please notice at the bottom of each page there is a key that identifies the stakeholder that would be responsible for implementation. You will notice the legislature is denoted by a star. The PowerPoint that we will walk through singles out only the legislative recommendations.

At this time I will ask Thomas Beadle to walk through the recommendations of the Council.

**Education** is the first category area that includes the most legislative recommendations.

1. The first recommendation is to create a Virtual High School for Scholars. This recommendation proposes to reorganize the Center for Distance Education to offer additional advanced placement or AP and dual credit courses to meet the increased demand of courses due to the new North Dakota academic and career & technical education scholarship.
2. The second recommendation is for increased Student-to-Student Retention Efforts. The council felt that the most powerful and timely advice comes from their peers.
3. The third recommendation is to increase the Academic and Career Advising on College Campuses with the establishment of a center on each campus that includes hours into the evenings and a peer-to-peer program to support. There was a lot of positive discussion in the meeting referencing programs that are based in the residence halls that has students staffed that can give good advice.

4. The fourth recommendation calls for more awareness of the quality of North Dakota college and universities. This is a reflection of our young professionals and recent college graduates who felt they had an outstanding educational opportunity that was regionally or nationally recognized and didn't realize it until the later years of college or post graduation. They would like to see an emphasis in marketing the quality of North Dakota colleges and universities and using peer-to-peer strategies.
5. The fifth recommendation recommends Sustaining the new North Dakota Scholarship Program and identifying a permanent funding source. There is great concern that with tighter budgets, campus operation funding will eventually come into competition with the scholarship.
6. The sixth recommendation calls for a truth in lending clause for student loans. Students are able to authorize student loans online which is convenient and appreciated, but there is no understanding of what the actual cost of the loan will be or what the monthly payment will be.

The next category is the **Job Opportunity**. There are three legislative recommendations in this category.

1. The first recommendation is asking for legislation that would require a course in the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade that includes career exploration and life skill development and creating a plan of student that would be reviewed each year in high school thereafter.
2. The second recommendation is asking the North Dakota University System to increase the online course offerings for advanced degrees.

3. The third recommendation is one that may have been in the top three for amount of time and research that the students dedicated to discussion. The students discussed the multiple locations and ways there are to find an internship and how frustrating the process can be. Some utilize their faculty advisor, others go to job service and some utilize their career services offices on campus. The council recommends creating one portal website for internship opportunities, scholarships, and other resources for young people and career advisors/counselors. It is specifically recommended that the following entities of the North Dakota Youth Office in conjunction with Career Services offices and Job Service North Dakota, North Dakota University System and the Young Professionals network work together to make this happen.
4. The final and fourth recommendation is to increase the number of Career & Technical Education courses in high school.

The third **category** is Recreation and Entertainment. There are no legislative recommendations in this section.

1. The first recommendation is for communities and other entities to coordinate “fun busses” to transport to events in the metropolitan areas that may have more diverse shopping and entertainment. When you look at this next generation, research and studies point to young people liking to travel

in groups and moving as a cluster therefore this recommendation echoes the next generation in making entertainment accessible.

2. The second recommendation is to create and encourage incentives for after school activities.
3. The third recommendation is under the topic of technology and infrastructure. One recommendation that I will highlight is actually a recommendation to private businesses to create and adopt social networking policies.

The fourth and last category is **Health, Wellness & Safety**. There is one legislative recommendation in this section.

1. There was great concern and discussion about suicide and depression from the council. Maloni Fox, who is from New Town talked about the issues she saw on the reservation and in schools with suicide and her concerns. The council has recommended for professional development to be focused on identifying the warning signs of suicide and depression for teachers and especially support staff.
2. The second recommendation emphasized the need for our local schools to look at our physical education courses in relation to student athlete participation and putting an emphasis on lifestyle skills and doing so through a combination of classroom time and gym time.

3. The third recommendation again focuses in on the skills of wellness that young people need to learn. The council asks for targeted informational campaigns on wellness with a focus on fitness for young people.
4. The fourth recommendation of substance abuse had a great deal of tough, honest conversation. The council reached consensus that there needs to be again a focus on peer-to-peer education, college campuses need to support programs such as “safe-rides”, which are subsidized cab ride services to a residence, and on the local community level district judges are encouraged to assign responsibility jointly to parents and minors under the age of 18 for alcohol violations and finally local school boards are encouraged to consistently enforce the suspension rules for alcohol violations. A powerful statement that was made during the meeting and that is also in the report is, that “certainty and consistency in punishment from local authorities is MORE important than severity of punishment.”
5. The final recommendation, which is the legislative recommendation, is for communities to develop accessibility to facilities for individual and group fitness. The students in our rural communities especially commented on the importance for just someplace, may it be the school gym or a small renovated area, to go for recreation and fitness.

There has been a great deal of discussion around what it is that is attractive to young people. I think one of the most powerful statements that were concluded was that young people feel that job opportunities and quality education attract young people to

the state, and the positive quality of life factors contribute to the choice to remain, or come back to North Dakota. You can find the Youth council report at [www.youthforward.com](http://www.youthforward.com). At this time I would entertain any questions about the report.