



Chairman Holmberg and members of the committee,

My name is Faith Wahl, and I serve as the Vice President of Communication for the North Dakota Student Association (NDSA). I am here today to provide support for HB 1375, relating to a tuition scholarship program for students taking dual-credit courses while in high school.

The North Dakota Student Association is a statewide organization that represents the voices of approximately 45,000 students enrolled in the eleven public institutions throughout the state of North Dakota. The NDSA meets monthly to discuss different issues and topics that are relevant to students and votes on resolutions to express the NDSA's opinion on those topics that impact higher education.

On November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021, the NDSA General Assembly met and approved *NDSA-06-2021: A Resolution in Support of NDSA's 20-21 Legislative Priorities*. Outlined in the document are the four primary priorities of the NDSA, including "issues of higher education in support of access, affordability, quality, and student experience" [1]. Additionally, the NDSA General Assembly met on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and approved *NDSA-09-2021: A Resolution Supporting HB 1375* [2]. HB 1375 proposes the creation of a scholarship program for students that enroll in dual credit classes while in high school. The implementation of this bill would have multiple positive impacts for higher education students in North Dakota.

As mentioned above, a key priority of the NDSA is advocating for increased affordability in higher education. According to data from the US Department of Education and the US Census Bureau, the average student loan debt in 2020 for a North Dakota student was approximately \$29,000 per borrower [3]. If HB 1375 were to be implemented, high school students that remain in North Dakota for their post-secondary education would have the opportunity to receive a tuition credit of up to \$750 for the cost of their dual credit classes completed while in high school. This incentive would increase affordability for higher education students and alleviate barriers for individuals who wish to continue their education in North Dakota.

In addition to providing greater affordability for North Dakota higher education students, HB 1375 would incentivize high school students to consider completing their post-secondary education within the state. This could have a direct positive impact on higher education by increasing student enrollment and retention and lessen the burden of tuitional costs. Furthermore, when more individuals remain in North Dakota to pursue post-secondary degrees, there is an increased potential to expand the workforce and diversify the economy within the state. Overall, HB 1375 would increase academic opportunities for students and help mitigate financial costs associated with higher education.

The NDSA supports HB 1375 and the intent to create a scholarship program for students taking dual credit courses while in high school. As North Dakota navigates through the COVID-19 pandemic, it is of paramount importance to invest in students, their wellbeing, and their academic success.

I respectfully request a do pass recommendation on HB 1375 and am available to answer any questions. Thank you.

[1] <https://ndsa.ndus.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2021/01/NDSA-06-2021a.pdf>

[2] <https://ndsa.ndus.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2021/02/NDSA-09-2021.pdf>

[3] <https://educationdata.org/student-loan-debt-by-state#north-dakota>



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- [1] <https://ndsa.ndus.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2021/01/NDSA-06-2021a.pdf>
- [2] <https://ndsa.ndus.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2021/02/NDSA-09-2021.pdf>
- [3] <https://educationdata.org/student-loan-debt-by-state#north-dakota>