



January 20, 2021

To: Senate Appropriations Committee
Re: SB 2018 – ND Tourism Division Support

Dear Chairman Holmberg & Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee:

My name is Jim Bridger and I am the owner of AmericInn Hotels of Medora & Dickinson, ND as well as the Historic Little Missouri Saloon. As you are aware the pandemic has left the tourism industry in shambles and many cities have seen the lowest tourism rates in history. Destination cities have been left with little or no tourism funding so they are relying on the State Tourism Division to supplement their tourism efforts in the months or even years ahead.

In addition to a vested personal interest in tourism, I am an active member of the Board of Directors for the Dickinson and Medora Convention & Visitors Bureaus which coordinate tourism efforts for their communities. In both of my CVB roles I have been involved with painstaking decisions involving budget cuts due to large decreases in our local tourism. Prior to the Covid-19 outbreak 2020 was set to be a record tourism year for our state, however it did not turn out that way. If anything positive can be taken from the pandemic it is that there is a renewed interest in outdoor activities like hunting and visiting state and National Parks. North Dakota is poised to be a national leader in tourism and the natural wonders within our state complement current tourism trends. I am writing today to offer wholehearted support of increasing ND Tourism Division funding from 9 million per year to 18 million for the biennium to attract additional tourists, groups & meetings and to offer extended marketing support to our communities that rely so heavily on tourism.

While I am aware that you are regularly faced with grueling decisions regarding cutting and adding to state budgets, I feel that the tourism budget is one that continues to repay the state and its cities through incremental revenue generated by tourism activities. I am excited to learn of your decision to increase the Tourism Division funding in the weeks to come. Thank you for your time and for already doing so much to help resuscitate our communities since the inception of the pandemic. I would be glad to answer any questions you or your committee may have regarding tourism in our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Bridger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jim Bridger- President
AmericInn Medora & Dickinson
Historic Little Missouri Saloon