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January 31, 2023

Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Eric Ripley, Executive Director of Career & Technical Education (CTE) for the Grand Forks Public Schools and Director of the virtual Grand Forks Area Career & Technology Center. I am communicating my support of HB1451, relating to increasing the amount of the North Dakota Scholarship for qualifying students.

The development of the North Dakota Academic and North Dakota Career and Technical Education Scholarship originated into law with the first eligible graduating class being the 2009 – 2010 school year. In 2011, the eligibility requirements were changed to include specific coursework, in addition to a minimum requirement on the ACT or WorkKeys exams. Over the course the next several years, modifications and small adjustments to the requirements of the North Dakota Academic and North Dakota Career and Technical Education Scholarship were made, and others proposed during session that were rejected. During the 67<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly in 2021, the new North Dakota Scholarship was created through the passage of SB2289. However, since the very first graduating class in 2010, the maximum amount granted per student under this state scholarship has always remained at \$6,000.

According to [educationdata.org](http://educationdata.org), college tuition inflation averaged 4.63% annually from 2010 to 2020 (<http://educationdata.org/college-tuition-inflation-rate#>). Certainly, the cost of higher education has increased since 2010, providing a strong case for this committee to examine the North Dakota state scholarship program. The proposed \$4,000 increase would represent a 66.7% increase in the overall amount, which would actually slightly exceed the average cost of tuition inflation since the inception of the state scholarship.

In visiting with families and students, I can attest that the presence of the North Dakota Scholarship is one of the key factors when examining post-secondary options. Within our state, strategies for addressing our workforce needs includes keeping our current youth within the state. Support of HB1451 with an increase to the overall maximum amount awarded to eligible students would be helpful in this regard.

Sincerely,

Eric Ripley  
Executive Director of CTE & Technology  
Grand Forks Public Schools  
Grand Forks Area Career & Technology Center