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House Bill 1531
House Education Committee
February 9th, 2023

Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee,

For the record, my name is Faith Wahl, and I serve as the Student Body President at the University of North Dakota (UND). I am submitting this testimony in concurrence with Morgan Mastrud, the Student Body Vice President at UND. We are submitting testimony in opposition to HB 1531, including the amendments that were proposed to the committee on February 8th, 2023.

When considering HB 1531 and the impact that it would have on higher education in North Dakota, we feel that it is important to consider how this bill would negatively impact students both financially and academically. First, several students would lose access to critical financial aid if this bill were to pass. Currently, 1.58 million dollars are allocated to scholarships, grants, or tuition waivers for undergraduate, graduate, law, and medical students that would no longer be awarded based on the implications of the proposed amendments. This financial aid is crucial to student success, particularly in times of great economic need and inflationary periods. The financial aid that students receive positively impacts their life, including areas such as food, housing, books, supplies, and other expenses related to higher education. Removing these key opportunities for students would result in increased financial hardships and create barriers to recruiting and retaining students in North Dakota.

Beyond the serious financial implications that this bill would impose on students, several significant academic programs would be affected as well. These include, but are not limited to, the Indians Into Medicine (INMED) and the Recruitment and Retention of American Indians