



House Bill 1016

Supporting Testimony

Submitted by Dr. Alyssa Martin, State Director, North Dakota Center for Distance Education (NDCDE)

House Appropriations – Government Operations Division

Dear Chairman Monson and Committee Members:

I am writing to support funding a full-time coordinator within the North Dakota National Guard (NDNG) to administer the Next Gen Leader Program, a leadership development initiative designed to provide structured pathways into military service for high school students.

A key component of this initiative is the Military Pathway Program, developed and delivered by NDCDE, North Dakota's only statewide public virtual school, to provide high school students with structured preparation for military careers. The program has already shown strong potential in supporting NDNG recruitment efforts, with **36 students currently enrolled** in our first course and a request for an appropriation in NDCDE's budget to waive tuition for up to 300 students.

Recognizing the value of this pathway, North Dakota is taking steps to incentivize student participation:

- The Military Pathway Program has been incorporated into the Choice Ready Framework, ensuring it counts toward fulfilling the "Military Readiness" component of this framework.
- **HB 1404**, if passed, will **add the program to state scholarship requirements**, further encouraging students to enroll.

While NDCDE provides curriculum, instruction, and course delivery, on-the-ground support, coordination, and student engagement are critical to maximizing the program's impact. This is where the requested Next Gen Leader Program Coordinator position within NDNG is essential.

How the Military Pathway Program Prepares Students for Military Careers

The Military Pathway Program consists of courses designed in collaboration with NDNG to introduce students to military careers, develop leadership skills, and prepare them for service. These include:

- Introduction to Military Careers – Explores career pathways in all branches of service, rank structures, and expectations of service members.
- ASVAB Essentials: Skills for Military Success – Helps students develop skills needed to perform well on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), a key factor in military job placement.
- Military Health & Fitness – Focuses on physical and mental readiness, including fitness training, nutrition, stress management, and military fitness requirements.

- Career Foundations in Military Leadership – Builds teamwork, decision-making, and ethical leadership skills critical for success in military roles.
- Military Leadership Capstone – Offers hands-on career exposure, job shadowing opportunities with NDNG personnel, and leadership experiences.

The Role of the Next Gen Leader Program Coordinator

The Next Gen Leader Program Coordinator will ensure students receive structured, real-world military learning experiences that complement their coursework. Many assignments in the Military Pathway Program require students to engage in military-related activities, such as job shadowing, leadership training, and physical fitness assessments. The coordinator will work within NDNG and NDCDE to develop these opportunities, ensuring students can complete required course components in a meaningful and relevant way.

The coordinator will furthermore help NDCDE keep new military course standards current and aligned with the military's evolving demands and operations. Additionally, as North Dakota considers new ESPB teaching requirements for military instructors, the coordinator will validate credentials for teachers interested in teaching new military preparation courses once these requirements are finalized.

A key component of NDCDE's instructional model is the learning coach, a designated adult responsible for supervising exams, helping students stay on pace, and troubleshooting challenges. For the Military Pathway Program, NDNG recruiters will serve as learning coaches, allowing them to:

- Build relationships with students considering military service.
- Provide real-world military context to coursework.
- Reinforce discipline, leadership, and military expectations.

The Next Gen Leader Program Coordinator will:

- Train and assign recruiters as learning coaches.
- Monitor student progress and engagement.

Why This Investment Matters

Funding this position will:

- Ensure compliance with new ESPB military instructor standards.
- Expand structured military career preparation for North Dakota students.
- Strengthen NDNG recruitment efforts by fostering early engagement.
- Ensure students receive meaningful, hands-on military learning experiences.
- Create a sustainable pipeline of career-ready recruits.

Without this dedicated role, the program's ability to support NDNG recruitment efforts and grow statewide will be limited.

The Next Gen Leader Program, administered by NDNG, will support NDCDE's Military Pathway Program through this coordinator position. This collaborative model ensures students receive structured support, mentorship, and real-world military experiences that prepare them for service. I respectfully urge the committee to fund the Next Gen Leader Program Coordinator to ensure this initiative's continued growth, success, and impact.

Sincerely,

Alyssa Martin, Ph.D.

NDCDE State Director