



House Bill 1016

Testimony Supporting House Bill 1016

Submitted by Kaitlyn Allen, Director of Curriculum
North Dakota Center for Distance Education

Chairman Wanzek and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Kaitlyn Allen, and I serve as Director of Curriculum for the North Dakota Center for Distance Education (NDCDE). I'm here to express strong support for funding a full-time Next Gen Leader Program Coordinator within the North Dakota National Guard (NDNG).

At NDCDE, we believe students should graduate not only with a diploma, but with a clear sense of direction and purpose. That's why we developed the **Military Preparation Program** in partnership with NDNG—to offer high school students a structured, high-quality virtual sequence that introduces them to military careers, builds leadership skills, and prepares them for service.

The program includes five courses:

- **Introduction to Military Careers** – Students explore military branches, rank structures, and service expectations while considering how military careers align with their personal interests and goals.
- **ASVAB Essentials: Skills for Military Success** – This course strengthens the academic and test-taking skills students need to succeed on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), which directly impacts their future military placement opportunities.
- **Military Health & Fitness** – Students learn about physical readiness, mental resilience, nutrition, and the fitness requirements expected of service members.
- **Career Foundations in Military Leadership** – This course builds essential skills like decision-making, ethics, communication, and teamwork—all within a military context.
- **Military Leadership Capstone** – A hands-on experience that incorporates job shadowing with NDNG personnel, leadership training, and career exploration, tying together everything students have learned.

We currently have 36 students enrolled in the first course, and we've submitted a budget request to waive tuition for up to 100 students—removing a key barrier to access. The pathway is now included in the **Choice Ready Framework** under Military Readiness, and if House Bill 1404 is passed, students who complete it will also meet new **state scholarship requirements**, further incentivizing participation.

This is a program that blends academic rigor, career readiness, and real-world relevance. But curriculum alone isn't enough. For students to get the full benefit of these courses, they need structured support and access to real military experiences. That's where the **Next Gen Leader Program Coordinator** plays a vital role.

This position would:

- Coordinate military-related activities that students are required to complete—like job shadowing, physical training assessments, and leadership experiences.
- Collaborate with NDCDE to keep course content aligned with current military standards and credentialing requirements.
- Support future military instructors in meeting anticipated ESPB licensure requirements.
- Train NDNG recruiters to serve as learning coaches—adult mentors who guide students through their courses, monitor progress, and build meaningful relationships.

Our learning model depends on these learning coaches to keep students engaged, supported, and accountable. Having recruiters serve in this role gives students a direct connection to military professionals and reinforces leadership, structure, and discipline—core values of military life.

Funding this position will:

- Provide the hands-on support needed to connect virtual coursework with in-person, real-world learning.
- Ensure students statewide can participate in high-quality military preparation, regardless of geography.
- Create a sustainable bridge between education and enlistment.
- Strengthen NDNG's recruitment pipeline by engaging students early and meaningfully.

The Military Preparation Program is already gaining traction. Students are enrolling. Schools are asking for it. And with your support, it can become a cornerstone of career readiness across North Dakota. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kaitlyn Allen

NDCDE Director of Curriculum and LMS