



NDSA-04-2021

A Resolution Outlining Student Concerns with North Dakota Ballot Constitutional Measure No. 1

WHEREAS, the North Dakota Student Association (NDSA) represents the voice of North Dakota's 45,000 public college and university students; and,

WHEREAS, the purpose of NDSA is to represent all students enrolled in the North Dakota University System (NDUS) and advocate on issues of higher education in support of access, affordability, quality, and the student experience; and,

WHEREAS, on North Dakota's ballot this November is Constitutional Measure No. 1 which proposes a change in voting members to the State Board of Higher Education (SBHE), the governing body that oversees all eleven public institutions of higher learning in North Dakota; and,

WHEREAS, for decades one of the eight seats has been reserved for a voting student representative; and,

WHEREAS, Measure 1 proposes an increase in board members from eight members to fifteen. The measure also adds new stipulations that "prohibit state legislators, elected state officials, state employees, and individuals employed full time by any institution under the board's control from serving on the board," increases the term of appointment from four to six years, and changes other aspects of the board's structure and governance¹; and,

WHEREAS, the number of non-student board members is doubling from seven to fourteen, but this ballot measure does not give students an additional student voice, creating an imbalance and effectively weakening students' ability to represent ourselves on the board that governs our education; and,

WHEREAS, the student member on the board has been invaluable in connecting board members, who are often long-graduated from their institutions of higher education, to the needs and concerns of the modern-day student; and,

WHEREAS, the student member has been well-represented by previous students serving in the role and State Board members, University System staff, and institutional administration and staff have often expressed their gratitude and respect for the students serving in the role; and,

WHEREAS, for decades the NDSA has played an integral role in nominating at least three candidates for the position from which the governor chooses the next student member of the SBHE; and,

¹ <https://vote.nd.gov/PortalListDetails.aspx?ptlhPKID=128&ptlPKID=1>



WHEREAS, the duty of the SBHE is to oversee our educational needs and to make policy decisions that directly affect us, North Dakota's higher education students, with the best interests of the system and our education in mind; and,

WHEREAS, because of the history of strong student members on the SBHE, the role our organization plays in the selection of the student member, and the NDSA's duty to represent and advocate for students, the NDSA feels the need to publicly comment on this ballot measure that changes the composition and structure of our governing board; and,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the NDSA formally states its concern with Constitutional Measure No.1 as it significantly diminishes the voice and weight that students carry on the State Board of Higher Education.

Respectfully submitted,

Gracie Lian
NDSA President

Approved by the NDSA General Assembly on Saturday, October 9th, 2020