



April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Dear Members of the North Dakota House of Representatives,

The North Dakota Student Association (NDSA) represents the voice of North Dakota's 45,000 public college and university students. As an authority on student interests in the state of North Dakota, the NDSA advocates on issues of higher education in support of enhancing the student experience.

As the NDSA represents the voice of the students of North Dakota, we strive to empower students, create collaboration between the eleven NDUS institutions, provide student perspective on higher education policy, and to better the NDUS. In pursuit of these objectives, the NDSA has passed both resolutions and provided testimony on behalf of students pursuing a higher education degree in North Dakota.

One of the bills that the NDSA has been concerned about this legislative session is SB 2247, which relates to prohibiting divisive concepts in higher education. In response to this proposed bill, the NDSA General Assembly passed [NDSA-17-2223](#), opposing this bill. This resolution states that SB 2247 diminishes the student's ability to engage in productive discussion, have respectful disagreements, develop critical thinking skills, and the choice to pursue higher education free from academic mandates. At the time the bill conflicted with the First Amendment, the North Dakota constitution, and with accreditation. Accreditation, if hindered, would inhibit the ability of institutions to receive federal financial aid and could negatively impact overall attendance at NDUS institutions.

In the time since the NDSA passed this resolution, SB 2247 has been amended. Rather than prohibiting the teaching of divisive concepts, it now authorizes a study on the effects of prohibiting specified content in academic curriculum and in the training of students, as well as the constitutionality of such prohibitions.

While the NDSA maintains its opposition of SB 2247 in its original form, the NDSA does support this amendment. The NDSA believes that this amendment allows time for the state and the NDUS to examine the impact on college accreditation if there is a ban passed on specified concepts. It would also give the NDSA time to investigate further the effects of a ban on specified concepts on free speech. The NDSA supports the current amendment to SB 2247 to authorize a study of the effects on banning divisive concepts in Higher Education as well as a study looking into ways an individual can report violations of suppression of free speech.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christopher M. Scott  
President of the North Dakota Student Association