

Good Morning. My name is Mary Fredricks. I am the State Initiative Chair for the North Dakota Chapter of TRIO QASPIRE, an organization made up of education professionals in the 17 Federal TRIO Program located at two and four year colleges and universities in the state. I also work as an advisor for the Student Support Services Program at the University of North Dakota.

Federal TRI program are support programs offering education support services, such as tutoring, mentoring, academic advising, and college preparation to low income students who are the first in their families to go to college. First generation is the term I will use to refer to these students.

There program, including the pre-college programs Upward Bound, Taleng Sera, the Educational opportunity Center, Veteran's Upward Bound, and the college programs, Student Support Services, and the McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program were created by the Higher Education Act of 1965. ND TRIO Programs have been working in the state for over 40 years currently serve nearly 4500 students middle school through adult.

This bill, SB 2303 would create a pilot project whereby the state board of Higher Education would award grant to North Dakota institution for the purpose of offering support services to increase the graduation rates of low income, first generation students. These support services would include tutoring, personal, financial, and academic advising, mentoring, cultural enrichment, and work-study opportunities.

Why does North Dakota ASPIRE UREG YOUTH O SUPPORT THIS BILL?
First of all first generation low income student enter college and complete postsecondary programs at a much lower rate than students who are not first generation and low income. Nationally, less than 50% of first generation low income students go on to college within one year after high school compared to 85% of students whose parents have college degrees. Only 27% of first generation students earn an Associates degrees or higher compared to 68% of non first generation students. Only 12% of first generation students complete bachelor's degrees compared to 58% of other students.

Low income status is also an obstacle for these students. There is a strong correlation between income level and bachelor's degree completion rates. In 2007, 24.5% of student in the bottom income quartile had earned a

bachelor's degree by age 24 as compared to 94.6% of student from the top income quartile.

A second reason who ASPIRE URGES YOUR SUPPORT FOR SB 2303, is that providing support services to first generation, low income students such as tutoring, mentoring, advising, and cultural enrichment has increased their success at the state's college and universities that have TRIO Student Support Services programs.

How do we know this? Well, we look at their retention rates. Retention rate is a term that refers to the number of students who are retained by an institution from the freshman to the sophomore year. It is a widely accepted predictor of future degree completion. The 2006-2007 retention rate for students at North Dakota State University System at 2 year institutions was 67.6% while the retention rate for Student support Services participants these institutions was 70.9%. NDUS 4 year institutions retained 70.1% of students from the freshmen to the sophomore year, while 85.3% of Student Support Services students were retained at the state's 4 year institutions.

Finally, North Dakota ASPIRE believes that the pilot projects made possible by the appropriation in SBG 2303 will provide approaches aimed at helping more ND students succeed in postsecondary education.

There was much discussion of appropriate accountability measures for the North Dakota State University System by the 2007-2008 Interim Higher Education Committee. One of their recommendations was the NDUS increase the number of North Dakota citizens having Associates Degrees or higher to the level of the top performing states and countries. However, in 2007 the North Dakota Kids Count Fact Book published by the state Data Center reported that over 32,000 K-12 students qualified for the free and reduced lunch program, a key indicator of low income status. According to Postsecondary Education Opportunity, only 30%, roughly 10,000 of that 32,000 will pursue postsecondary education. In order to increase the number of North Dakota citizens who have associates degrees or higher, we have got to make postsecondary education accessible to more first generation, low income students and expand support programs to help them succeed.

SB 2303 is an innovative, entrepreneurial approach to help the state address this problem. Therefore, the membership of North Dakota ASPIRE recommends that you give it a DO PASS recommendation.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I would be happy to take question at this time.