

North Dakota

Travel Alliance Partnership

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MEMBERS

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North Dakota Association of
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Scenic Byway
Vern's Rental
Williston CVB

Testimony of Terri Thiel

Chair, Travel Alliance Partnership

In support of HB 1380

March 31, 2021

Chairman Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee:

My name is Terri Thiel, and I am the chair of the North Dakota Travel Alliance Partnership (ND TAP). ND TAP is a coalition of travel industry stakeholders, including CVBs, state attractions, businesses and other interested stakeholders, in this viable and growing sector of North Dakota's economy. On behalf of the tourism industry and its partners, I am writing to voice support for HB 1380.

HB 1380 creates an Economic Diversification Fund that would appropriate funding derived from Legacy Fund earnings to support tourism initiatives. Funding for tourism projects would be administered by the North Dakota Tourism Division.

This proposal is similar to ND TAP's vision of creating a Destination Development Fund, which would fund new or expanded operations capable of attracting visitors from outside North Dakota. HB 1380's proposal is also similar to a previous tourism infrastructure grant program that was funded from 2013-2017. While the grant program was short lived, it funded many projects that have since become staples of many communities across North Dakota including stage expansion at Sleepy Hollow Park in Bismarck, the

North Valley Arts Council in Grand Forks, the Fargo Moorhead Curling Club facility, Lund's Landing on Lake Sakakawea, exhibits at the Dakota Territory Air Museum in Minot, and the High Plains Cultural Center in Killdeer.

As our industry has found, workers do not move to a new state without visiting one first and tourism projects are essential to attracting and retaining visitors to a community. As a result, tourism initiatives funded by the economic diversification fund in HB 1380 can equally serve as a workforce development tool.

ND TAP realizes the potential and value of creating an economic diversification fund and asks the Senate Appropriations Committee recommend a do-pass on HB 1380.