

TESTIMONY SUPPORT FUNDING FOR SB 2024

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Chairman Pollert and House Appropriations Human Resources Division

My name is Mara Yborra; I am speaking on the behalf of the Healthy Community Coalition from the United Tribes Technical College. I am here to provide testimony and support for funding SB 2024.

The Healthy Community Coalition is a group comprised of representatives from campus departments who focus on health initiatives for the campus. We are fortunate enough to have received technical support and funding through Bismarck Burleigh Public Health, Tobacco Prevention and Control program to work on adopting a comprehensive tobacco free college policy to include the entire campus.

A majority of the students at United Tribes Technical College are Native American and their family members live on campus with them. Native Americans are disparately affected by tobacco. There is a 42% smoking rate for Native Americans in North Dakota. The tobacco industry is counting on this disparity and the college age group becoming addicted to their products in order to secure sales for the future. United Tribes is committed to the health and well-being of the children, students, faculty and staff of our campus, and to visitors who come here.

Bismarck Burleigh Public Health (BBPH) Tobacco Prevention Program provided technical support through education, resources and information about the importance of strengthening UTTC's smoke-free policy to a comprehensive tobacco free policy to include the entire campus. We were able to move forward on passing a tobacco free

policy at the United Tribe Technical College in 2013 with implementation in 2014. We have learned that a tobacco-free policy provides an environment that reinforces healthy behavior. As the policy removes the immediate threat of exposure to secondhand smoke, it also decreases the use of tobacco and the number of people who start smoking in college. It establishes a healthy learning environment while maintaining our respect for Native American traditions.

This funding also gave us the available resources for an implementation plan that included: tobacco- free signs, interior sidewalk signs for the buildings because of the cold weather, bathroom posters, payroll stuffers, window decals for campus building doors and residential homes, compliance cards and ND Quit Ads in their newsletter.

The United Tribes Technical College has become the first tribal college in North Dakota to adopt a "Tobacco Free" campus policy and 3rd in the United States. At the time the policy passed, UTTC joined 811 other colleges to have a tobacco free policy for their campus. This policy trend has grown to 1,427 colleges and universities across the US. They recognized the value of tobacco-free policy will benefit their students in present and the future by providing a healthy and safe environment to live and learn. United Tribes Technical College now protects approximately 900 students, faculty, staff and families from exposure to tobacco.

Please support funding SB2024. It is important to continue to fund The Center for Tobacco Prevention and Control Policy, because of their policy expertise. If North Dakota wants to continue reducing tobacco use rates, and keep tobacco from influencing the next generation, we need to remember that it's about policy change. It's about working with good partners like the Center and Bismarck Burleigh Public Health. Thank you.