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October 24, 2013

The Honorable John McHugh
Secretary of the Army
Department of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1400

Dear Secretary McHugh,

I write regarding the Army Cadet Command's decision to close North Dakota State University's (NDSU) Reserve Officer Training Corp, or ROTC, program. I understand the Army needs to make tough budget decisions during these challenging fiscal times, but I do not believe this to be an effective way to cut costs.

Several factors, such as student academic performance and success, are critical to the Army's success. With 183 teams present at this year's Ranger Buddy Competition—a national military competition—NDSU's ROTC program was selected as Best Battalion. NDSU's cadets also exceeded the national average in every event at Operation Warrior Forge 2013—the capstone exercise to becoming a U.S. Army lieutenant. Thirty percent of NDSU's cadets have earned the distinguished military graduate honor over the last two years, placing them in the top 20 percent of the nation. Finally, NDSU's program has allowed the North Dakota and Minnesota National Guard to meet its officer strength requirements—a critical requirement in time of war.

It is unclear to me how NDSU's ROTC program failed to meet the criteria for commissioning 15 or more officers per year. Seventy-two students are enrolled in the program through the Tri-College University (which summates to three universities). The program anticipates 33 students will graduate and be commissioned by May 2015—an average of 16.5 per year. The program guarantees all students who meet the curriculum and degree requirements to be commissioned as a Second Lieutenant after graduation. Students are under no obligation to repay benefits and scholarships they received prior to termination of the program—a lost investment on students who demonstrated outstanding potential at the national level. In addition, closing NDSU's ROTC program would force 39 cadets out of this very successful program.

NDSU's ROTC program was selected as one of 13 (out of 273) ROTC programs nationwide to come to an end. North Dakotans sign up to serve at a rate four times greater than the national average. I believe investing in NDSU students—who excel beyond many others—is not only cost-effective, it should remain a priority rather than diminished to subservience.

I request you share with me the evaluation criteria and process that led to this realignment. Particularly, I would like to know if academia, such as programs that educate a higher rate of students who excel through ranks in the Army, was a determining factor for realignment

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decisions. I would also like to know if any ROTC programs were given greater weight than others. Lastly, I appreciate knowing what, if any, future projections were calculated to determine the fiscal impact of maintaining the program versus costs saved in years to come.

As I mentioned earlier, I believe this program to be critical to the Army's success and should not be overlooked. I welcome you to discuss this with me in further detail, and I look forward to working with you on future initiatives that support a successful military. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Heidi Heitkamp
U.S. Senator

HH: jvf