

Dear Interim Finance Committee,

My name is Cordelia and I am writing to you to urgently discuss the importance of maintaining funding to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP) for veterinary medicine. Due to the COVID-19 public health crisis, WICHE PSEP is facing a substantial reduction in their budget and it will negatively impact Nevada students, like me, who are leaving the state to attend veterinary school. I am a fourth-generation Nevadan and have lived in Reno, NV my entire life. I attended Mount Rose Elementary School, Swope Middle School, Reno High School (Honors Diploma, 2010), and the University of Nevada-Reno for both my undergraduate (BA and BS, 2015) and master's (MPH, 2018) education. I have been working as a contractor for the Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health since 2018. Nevada is my home and I represent fierce Nevada pride every day.

I decided I wanted to pursue veterinary medicine shortly after I completed my MPH. Financing veterinary school responsibly is my number one goal. Since Nevada does not have an in-state veterinary school, I quickly set my sights on veterinary medicine programs at WICHE participating institutions. I applied to Washington State University's College of Veterinary Medicine and I received an acceptance and conditional WICHE funding offer. Washington State University is the best program for me and will provide me with an exceptional education. I will use this training and education to practice as a veterinarian in Nevada.

WICHE's veterinary medicine PSEP funding is extremely critical for students in my position. Without an in-state option, Nevada students hoping to become veterinarians face significant increases in debt burden due to out-of-state tuition costs. WICHE-supported Nevada professionals are guaranteed to work a minimum of 2-4 years in Nevada, which helps to alleviate workforce shortages. WICHE also creates additional employment opportunities that help contribute to a thriving Nevada economy. If Nevada is forced to cut funding to WICHE's PSEP, both the students and the great state of Nevada will face significant loss.

I urge you to discuss the importance of WICHE's PSEP with your colleagues and demand that funding remain available to the hardworking students of Nevada. Please carefully consider the negative impact on students if we are unable to receive WICHE funding to pursue professional education. This funding is vital to Nevada students who are otherwise unable to take on the debt burden that would come with attending an out-of-state veterinary school. Students, like myself, have made major life and financial decisions based on WICHE funding and it is deeply unfair to defund WICHE's PSEP at this time.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter, it is tremendously important to me and my family. I believe it should be a continued priority for the

entirety of Nevada as well. Please feel at liberty to contact me with any further questions or concerns.

Best Regards,

Cordelia Alexander-Leeder

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