March 12, 2019

Dear Representative <Lastname>:

As your constituent living in <Your City>, I am writing today in reference to South Dakota House Bill 1087.

As a student affairs professional, I see first-hand how students engage in conversations with those who have different perspectives and opinions on some of today’s most controversial and polarizing topics. <Insert personal statement or story>

On behalf of our students, I’m asking you to consider that House Bill 1087 may result in a chilling effect on speech, rather than protecting it. Rather than impose external conditions and restrictions on institutions and students, our institutions of higher education should be allowed the freedom to establish guidelines and rules for deliberation appropriate for their communities within our already established free speech case law. Oversight by external actors to ensure that rights are not infringed is appropriate, however interference by those actors without understanding of the nuance of campus culture risks doing more harm than good.

When large protests and counter-protests are expected to occur, college and university leaders spend countless hours planning and organizing both campus and community resources to ensure, above all, the safety of our students. Our college campuses are increasingly asked to cut costs not seen to be directly related to educating students. These unexpected and sometimes sudden protests involving free speech force college and university leaders to expend resources to keep the peace instead of investing in students' educations. Therefore, as a responsible steward of our public funds, I ask you to consider the student safety and funding implications for any legislation requiring college campuses to allow any and all to speak in campus buildings or grounds.

The future of our nation’s democracy depends on an educated citizenry capable of engaging in meaningful and respectful dialogue and deliberation with those with whom they disagree. I am relying on you to do what is right both for South Dakota’s students and our nation as a whole.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. I look forward to hearing from you about your plans to support our students, institutions of higher education, and the future of our country.

Sincerely,

<Your Name>

<Your Address, including Zip Code>