

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 13, 2023

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Baldwin and Ranking Member Capito:

We appreciate the ongoing support you have provided to the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID). We respectfully request NTID be funded at \$95,900,000 in the Fiscal Year 2024 (FY 24) Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill.

NTID is the world's first and largest technological college for deaf students and one of nine colleges at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). When NTID opened its doors in 1968, less than one percent of all college-age deaf individuals were enrolled in postsecondary education. Of those employed, most held unskilled or semi-skilled positions, and there were virtually no deaf people in technical or managerial positions. For more than 50 years and with the support of Congress, NTID has provided a college education leading to jobs and career advancement for deaf and hard-of-hearing students from across the country. Support for NTID is an investment with significant returns in the form of increased employment and reduced dependence on federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) payments for their deaf and hard-of-hearing students. NTID is a federal program that works.

For the current academic year, NTID enrolled 1,135 students. NTID's first-year persistence rates and graduation rates for both sub-baccalaureate and baccalaureate deaf and hard-of-hearing students were higher than the national rates for all students at two-year and four-year colleges. In FY 22, 96% of NTID's 2021 graduates had been placed in jobs commensurate with their education level, consistent with NTID's average employment rate of 95% for the last five years. Using data from the Social Security Administration in 2013, NTID showed that their almost 10,000 alumni over their lifetimes are employed at a higher rate and earn more (therefore paying more in taxes) than deaf and hard-of-hearing students who graduate from other institutions. For example, by age 50, the median salary for NTID deaf graduates with bachelor's degrees was \$58,000 compared to \$21,000 for deaf students who graduated from other institutions. Additionally, NTID graduates collect SSI at lower rates than deaf and hard-of-hearing students who do not attend college.

In FY 23, NTID received \$92,500,000 in federal appropriations, with \$9,500,000 designated to support and expand the NTID Regional STEM Center (NRSC) partnership. For FY 24, we are requesting an increase in NTID's operations funding from \$92,500,000 to \$95,900,000. This \$3.4M increase includes funding to hire additional sign language interpreters and captionists and

to expand STEM outreach activities to prepare deaf and hard-of-hearing middle and high school students for college and the workforce.

NTID offers career-focused associate degree programs, sign language interpreting programs, and an MS in Secondary Education of Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. NTID also provides transfer associate degree programs to baccalaureate and graduate studies in the other colleges of RIT. In support of those deaf and hard-of-hearing students enrolled in the other RIT colleges, whether as a result of direct admission to RIT or continuation from an NTID associate degree, NTID provides a range of access services (e.g., sign language interpreting, real-time speech-to-text captioning, notetaking) as well as tutoring services.

Deaf and hard-of-hearing students are pursuing the wide range of majors and career paths available to them at RIT, with students pursuing everything from a Ph.D. in Computing and Information Science to an MS in Manufacturing and Mechanical Systems Integration to a BS in Diagnostic Medical Sonography. As these students take full advantage of the more than 200 programs at RIT, the demand for skilled, specialized interpreting and captioning has increased. NTID's FY 24 appropriations request would enable them to hire 10 additional interpreters to satisfy 98% of interpreting requests and 15 additional captionists to provide captioning for both in-person and remote classes and activities, resolving the 100 hours of requests each week that cannot be satisfied currently.

For FY 24, NTID hopes to increase outreach funding by \$2,000,000 to expand on the work done by NTID and the NTID Regional STEM Center (NRSC). This STEM outreach serves deaf and hard-of-hearing middle and high school students by providing STEM career exploration and college preparation, dual credit courses, camps, and programming for their parents about STEM career opportunities. NTID and the NRSC also provide professional development to teachers on best practices for teaching deaf and hard-of-hearing students, professional development to interpreters on best practices for middle and high school STEM interpreting, workshops to VR counselors on best practices related to advice on opportunities in STEM education and careers, and outreach to employers on how to provide internship and career opportunities for deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

NTID has demonstrated a commitment to managing their resources responsibly and efficiently. NTID actively seeks alternative sources of public and private support, with 26% of NTID's Operations budget coming from non-federal funds, up from 9% in 1970. Since FY 2013, NTID raised more than \$14 million in support from individuals and organizations. NTID has also recognized that construction funding is limited and addressed critical renovations using existing federal and non-federal funds.

The return on investment we see from supporting the professional and technical education of young deaf Americans at NTID is profound: better-than-national-average persistence and graduation rates, an astounding employment rate, impressive earnings, and decreased reliance on federal entitlements. Therefore, we strongly support NTID's unique mission and their request for \$95,900,000 for FY 24.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kirsten Gillibrand

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator