

THE COLUMBUS Telegram

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GRANT FUNDING HALTED



KENNETH FERRIERA, JOURNAL STAR

“I Am A Man” director Andrew Troy speaks with legislative staff on the final day of the 2026 legislative session at the Capitol on Friday. State grant funding for the movie about Chief Standing Bear was halted amid a report from State Auditor Mike Foley that showed matching funds were not secured.

Nebraska state auditor has ‘serious doubts’ matching funds exist

ANNA KLEIBER
Lincoln Journal Star

A grant recipient awarded \$5 million in state funds to produce a feature film on the life of Chief Standing Bear failed to honor contractual obligations, leading to the suspension of the remaining grant money disbursement, State Auditor Mike Foley said Tuesday.

In 2023, the state Department of Economic Development awarded a grant to a limited liability company called I Am A Man (IAAM) to produce the film using \$5 million in taxpayer funds awarded by DED and an additional \$5 million in matching funds for a “total production budget of \$10 million,” according to the funding agreement.

While the grant application included a letter from WWPS.TV, a Hollywood



Foley

financier, supposedly showing the matching funds had been committed, the state auditor was unable to find “evidence of even a single cent” of matching dollars upon further investigation of the information included in IAAM’s application, raising “serious doubt that the match exists,” according to the 45-page letter issued to DED on Tuesday.

The letter said having matching funds secured was a “fundamental prerequisite” included in the DED’s grant agreement with IAAM, which explicitly states “documentation of matching funds must be provided contemporaneously with recipient’s requests for payment from the department,

and within the award agreement term,” according to a news release Tuesday.

Despite this, Foley’s team found that DED “failed to verify the availability of the matching funds” IAAM claimed to have secured.

IAAM received an initial \$2.5 million from DED in 2023 followed by 25 monthly payments over the course of two years that amounted to a total disbursement of more than \$4.1 million in grant funds.

While DED had issued its regular grant payments to IAAM through December 2025, it has since halted all further payments of the remaining unfulfilled grant award. DED sent a notice of suspension to IAAM on Friday after reviewing a preliminary draft of Foley’s letter.

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Nebraska agrees to stop in-state tuition for undocumented

CHRIS DUNKER
Lincoln Journal Star

Nebraska has agreed to a proposed consent decree with the U.S. government to stop providing in-state tuition and financial assistance to young people who were brought into the country illegally.

The proposed consent decree comes hours after a complaint was filed against Nebraska in a federal court in Omaha on Tuesday seeking to permanently enjoin the state from providing the benefit.

According to the lawsuit, Nebraska’s laws

“bestow eligibility for postsecondary education benefits on illegal aliens that United States citizens who reside elsewhere are not eligible for.”

A federal court must still approve the decree.

“The Nebraska law is unconstitutional as it unlawfully extended benefits to illegal immigrants which were not available to American citizens,” Attorney General Mike Hilgers said. “We filed the joint motion with the Department of Justice in order to ensure that this unconstitutional law was

permanently enjoined.”

In 2006, Nebraska enacted a law providing young people brought into the country illegally as children but who have established residency and who have graduated from a Nebraska high school with access to in-state tuition.

Nebraska’s law (LB239), which passed over the veto of then-Gov. Dave Heineman, did not provide undocumented students with state financial aid. Later attempts to repeal it were unsuccessful.

According to the Higher Ed Immigration

Portal, approximately 2.4% of students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities are undocumented, with about 57% of those having arrived in the country as children.

In Nebraska, approximately 6,000 of the 106,000 students enrolled in higher education are first generation, which the Higher Ed Immigration Portal describes as being born abroad and immigrating to the U.S.

Supporters of in-state tuition for

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