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March 2, 2021

Testimony of Ryan Jilek, Executive Vice-President  
Stark Development Corporation  
Regarding Bill SB 2018; ND Commerce Budget  
Senate Appropriations Committee

Chairman Holmberg, Vice-Chairs Krebsbach and Wanzek, and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee:

As Executive Vice-President for Stark Development Corporation, the economic development office serving Stark County and Dickinson, I respectfully submit this testimony in favor of SB 2018. Continued funding of the programs and services under this bill are vital for the support of the work we do to diversify our economy.

Funding for the **North Dakota Small Business Development Center (ND SBDC)** through the Partner Programs line and discretionary line in the bill is crucial for the continual delivery of these services to our local businesses, entrepreneurs and budding entrepreneurs. In January of 2021 the client numbers for our SBDC office in Dickinson were at a five-year high. State-wide the return on your investment in the ND SBDC during the last 18 months of the current biennium accounted for more than *177 new* small businesses, received more than *\$116 million in capital*, and *created, retained, or supported more than 8,019 jobs* in our state.

Funding for services through the **Procurement and Technical Assistance Center (PTAC)** under the discretionary line in this bill is another vital service to our region and the state. The support provided under these programs not only provides for the creation of new wealth within the state through entrepreneurship, but it is also an essential part of the economies in the communities of North Dakota.

We are in a unique position to capitalize on our rolling prairies, majestic badlands, world-class waters and wide-open spaces by stepping up our efforts in marketing our great state through tourism. Now is the time to capitalize on a pent-up demand for travel to places offering the safety and security of nature and open spaces. **The North Dakota Tourism Division** can only be effective in their efforts to attract these visitors by bringing their marketing budget to levels consistent with the competitive neighboring states. Please support SB 2018 ND Tourism Division budget at \$7 million/biennium to support an economic driver that provides an estimated \$3 billion in total traveler spending annually.

We sincerely thank you and encourage you to offer your support for SB 2018 and the impact it will have on the North Dakota economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Ryan Jilek'.

Ryan Jilek  
Executive Vice-President