



NORTH CENTRAL
PLANNING COUNCIL

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Dear Representative Monson and House Appropriations, Education & Environment Division committee members:

I am writing to urge you to increase the states funding of the ND SBDC. This nationally accredited program provides invaluable, no-cost business advising to small businesses all around the state and is influential in the growth of business and economic success in our state and local communities.

I have been a board member of North Central Planning Council, the host organization for the Devils Lake ND SBDC, since 2015. I have received quarterly and annual SBDC reports since that time and have seen first-hand the impacts of the Devils Lake SBDC and the entire ND SBDC network. North Dakota Region III consists of Benson, Cavalier, Eddy, Ramsey, Rolette, and Towner Counties as well as the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa and Spirit Lake Reservations. This Center has assisted Region III entrepreneurs and business owners with numerous business start-ups, expansions, business successions and obtaining millions of dollars in capital.

The ND SBDC provides support to businesses in many ways. They give guidance on developing business plans and financial projections, providing accurate and comprehensive industry data, creating marketing strategies, obtaining financing, enhancing websites and e-commerce, assessing cybersecurity issues, and much more. These efforts result in strong small business ecosystems in local communities and helps to create jobs and economic growth in our state.

They have also increased their services and outreach in the face of COVID-19. By providing live and recorded webinars to assist business owners with PPP Loan applications and forgiveness, the Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL), BND COVID-19 relief programs, and other business support, the ND SBDC has been on the front lines of saving and strengthening North Dakota's business community during the pandemic. The ND SBDC helped small business owners obtain nearly \$85M in capital for starting and expanding their companies. The organization also created, retained and supported 6,031 jobs in North Dakota.

Please support small business owners, local communities, and economic growth around our great state by proposing increased funding for the ND SBDC program. Now more than ever North Dakota needs programs like the ND SBDC that provide no-cost advising for our small businesses. Financial support for this program results in a healthier and more resilient small-business sector, creates meaningful jobs and thriving communities, and supports the overall North Dakota economy.

Sincerely,

Merle Boucher

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