



Home Builders Association of Fargo-Moorhead

1802 32nd Avenue South · Fargo, ND 58103 · (701) 232-5846 · hbafm.com · info@hbafm.com

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February 1, 2021

Appropriations Committee
North Dakota House of Representatives
State Capitol Building
600 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58505

Dear Chairman Delzer, Vice Chairman Kempenich and Members of the Committee:

The Home Builders Association of Fargo-Moorhead represents approximately 750 builders and related businesses throughout Cass County. We appreciate the opportunity to submit this letter urging you to support the current bond-based funding proposed for the career and technical education programs as written in House Bill 1431.

Housing, the workforce, and economic vitality determine quality of life and cannot be separated. When people invest in a home, they invest in their future and their community.

However, the workforce crisis is increasing construction costs and intensifying the need to retain skilled workers that are currently irreplaceable. Economic vitality will remain fractured and the losses will perpetuate until we, as a state, acknowledge and act upon the fact that 4-year degrees alone and unskilled labor do not build homes. The bond-based funding for technical education programs in House Bill 1431 provides the 67th Legislative Assembly the opportunity to do facilitate exactly that.

That program in Fargo is the Cass County Career Workforce Academy (CWA); a new educational facility planned through the collaborative work of the North Dakota State College of Science and multiple public and private entities in the region. To date, \$21 million has been secured from 60 private businesses, Fueling Our Future, Cass County, City of Fargo, City of West Fargo, and the U.S. Dept. of Commerce to begin the project. All k-14 schools in the area also endorse the project.

Technical schools like the Academy in Fargo and others proposed across the state will provide the information, curriculum and most importantly, the experiential education required to ensure our higher education provides career-oriented programming and perspectives that allow housing policies and workforce policies to complement each other.

CWA will do more than attract the students the construction industry seeks; the entire ecosystem will directly and indirectly experience the returns. Educating and training the workforce will revitalize the homebuilding that triggers economic growth. However, the cycle will remain stagnant until workforce acquires the skills and expertise to engage it.

HBA of F-M's vision is to nurture a thriving, innovative and diverse housing industry in our community.



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Economic potential abounds in North Dakota and the pent-up demand for housing has escalated beyond measure. House Bill 1431 the catalyst North Dakota needs to correct the crisis and we ask that you support it as written.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and the opportunity to comment. Please contact us with any questions or requests for further information.

Respectfully,

Bryce Johnson
Chief Executive Officer