



January 8, 2023

Members of the North Dakota
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS – EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

RE: Support for HB1019 – Career and Technical Education

Chairman Nathe and members of the House Appropriations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB1019. Your vote in support of the request is critical to the Department of Career and Technical Education, 1) to sustain current programming for career education, technical training, and workforce development, 2) to support CTE's growth, and 3) to expand access to CTE for students across the state through area career centers for workforce development and retention of North Dakota students.

CTE has been and will remain a vital component of the educational system, providing career awareness and preparing learners to be Choice Ready. With 18,000 job openings in North Dakota, skilled labor shortages, and North Dakota's thriving innovative ecosystem, strengthening CTE will serve as your legacy for intentional, sustainable career education and workforce development.

As Director of Career and Technical Education for Cass County, I am approached daily by business, industry, and post-secondary schools to connect with our K-12 teachers and students for recruitment of future employees. These requests are not limited to high school students but extend to elementary and middle school learners. With our State's low unemployment, workforce demands, and natural employee attrition, K-12 business partnerships are viewed as a mechanism to create company awareness, expose students to future careers, and provide experiential learning beyond the classroom.

In Cass County, we are pleased to offer a variety of career and technical education programs and pathways in our current K-12 educational systems. However, in 2018, our Career Workforce Academy curriculum study revealed program gaps in agriculture education, construction, manufacturing, and transportation. In our region, there is also a growing demand in medical careers, information technology, transportation, and biomedical technologies influenced by Sanford Health, Microsoft, General Equipment, and Aldevron, along with a host of other businesses. Despite K-12 efforts, schools are challenged to meet local school district demands, along with workforce demands.

In 2021, legislators saw the need to expand career education and earmarked funds for the construction of area career and technology centers. In Cass County, the public-private partnership between C3TEC, NDSCS Alumni Foundation, and NDSCS was approved for a \$10 million dollar grant to support the construction of the \$30 million dollar Career Innovation project. The CIC would provide a hub of coordination, expand career education to fill program gaps, and advance CTE experiences with NDSCS post-secondary programming. Unfortunately, delays in federal funding have delayed the project, with costs increasing daily due to inflation and supply chain demands. Also, the CIC project has met challenges due to federal requirements for receiving funds with a public-private partnership. Your support for HB1019 will place control back to North Dakota to drive the area career center vision to move projects forward, now. North Dakota could also take control to create state guidance to complete all approved projects, versus waiting for federal funding, further delays, and increasing costs.

HB1019 provides the critical financial support, essential to expand access to CTE programs for students across the state. As a member of the 68th Legislative Assembly, you will have the opportunity to support CTE as an investment in meeting our state's workforce challenges. I respectfully ask your support of HB1019, which supports the goals and objectives of Career & Technical Education.

Sincerely,

Dr. Denise Jonas, Cass County Director of Career & Technical Education