

March 14, 2025



Senate Bill 2018 Testimony: **In Favor**
House Appropriations – Education and Environment Division

Chairman Nathe and Committee Members,

The Western Region Economic Development (WRED) board of directors, representing Divide, McKenzie, Mountrail, and Williams Counties, **supports SB2018, but strongly requests the restoration of full funding of \$10 million for the Regional Workforce Impact Program (RWIP) as outlined in the state commerce budget.**

North Dakota's unemployment rate has continued to remain below 2.5% for over a year. To continue to attract and maintain workforce, childcare infrastructure, workforce training, and workforce attraction initiatives need to continue.

In the first round of the RWIP, most of the funds for District 1 were utilized for childcare infrastructure. The projects included:

- Williston utilized \$750,000 of RWIP funds towards a \$2.3 million renovation of the Crighton Building on Williston State College's campus. The City of Williston provided a STAR Fund grant of \$500,000 towards this project, and an additional \$135,000 grant towards the playground equipment. Williams County provided an initial grant of \$500,000, and an additional grant of \$1.4 million to ensure the project was completed. This facility has a capacity of 80. It is at 100% capacity and is fully staffed with 20-25 employees. 18 of those employees are full time, and the rest of the staff is part time with some being college students. Watford City utilized \$269,780 of RWIP funds towards a \$18.5 million new childcare facility adding an additional 180 childcare spots.
- McKenzie County committed \$11.5 million to the project and the City of Watford City provided the site valued at \$300,000.
- Divide County utilized \$40,220 of WRIP funds towards recruitment, up-skilling, re-skilling to enhance the medical staffing needed as well as CDL training. TrainND Northwest brought the training to Crosby. St. Luke's Medical Center provided the match for the medical training while a local employer provided the match for the CDL training.

In the second round of funding, more organizations were able to apply directly for the funds allowing even more projects to received funding and come to fruition. Projects that received RWIP funding included:

- Learning Adventures Childcare of Williston was funded \$487,000 to purchase a building and expand childcare capacity by 70 slots, Learning Adventure also received \$147,000 to purchase the Stony Creek location and expand childcare capacity by 50 slots.
- Watford City EDC was funded \$50,745.00 to expand the FIND YOUR FUTURE marketing plan, focusing on careers and value propositions in the Watford City region.
- Western Region Economic Development was funded \$40,000.00 for national digital marketing of regional in-person job fairs.
- The City of Alexander was funded \$500,000 to build a new childcare facility for approximately 70 children.
- The Divide County EDC was funded \$72,000 to develop a marketing campaign to attract new residents and workers to Divide County.
- The McKenzie County JDA was funded \$4,855 to create a magazine showcasing McKenzie County's lifestyle advantages to attract and retain a skilled workforce.
- Williams County was funded \$11,400 to develop a video series to introduce the community and its offerings, aiming to attract families and talent.
- The Souris Basin Planning Council, including Mountrail County, was funded \$241,500 to develop a regional identity and messaging strategy to attract a diverse and skilled workforce.

WRED appreciates all efforts from our legislators to address the continued workforce needs across the state and recommends a **Do Pass** on this bill with the RWIP at \$10 million.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann Kvande".

Ann Kvande, Executive Officer