

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, my name is Andrea Pfennig, and I am the Vice President of Government Affairs for the Greater North Dakota Chamber. GNDC is North Dakota's largest statewide business advocacy organization, with membership represented by small and large businesses, local chambers, and trade and industry associations across the state. We stand in **support** of Senate Bill 2019.

In our 2024 ND Economics and Employer Survey of our membership, 70% of respondents indicated they were having trouble hiring employees. Labor availability has been identified as the top business concern facing companies in North Dakota.

This issue is compounded when you consider that 44% of our members expect their number of employees to increase in the next year.

**In the next 12 months, do you anticipate your number of employees to:**



Because of this, we support resources for the implementation of career exploration programs. We also support collaborative efforts between the private sector and educational institutions that create awareness of career opportunities available in the state and better meet workforce needs. Programs such as apprenticeships, internships, and work-based learning cultivate workforce attraction and retention that are important when developing a talent pipeline for the state.

We respectfully request that the Committee consider an increase of \$3 million to the Grants line item of the bill. This would enhance CTE's ability to be responsive to industry needs by enabling them to expand current program offerings as well as develop new ones.

We hope that you will strengthen North Dakota's business climate by investing in workforce development. Thank you for your consideration.