

Chairman Nathe, members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Bailey Binstock, and I am a high school senior from Dickinson, North Dakota. Today, I stand before you in strong support of Senate Bill 2019 to highlight the impact that Career and Technical Education has had on me and thousands of students across North Dakota.

I have been fortunate to experience firsthand the opportunities and transformative power of CTE throughout my high school career, especially through the Southwest Area CTE Academy. Thanks to your support, as well as local industry partnerships and area school districts, the former 40-acre Halliburton complex in Dickinson has been transformed into a state-of-the-art training facility. Today, Southwest Area CTE serves students from seven high schools, two private schools, and homeschool students across four districts, offering fourteen diverse programs and serving over 1,118 students across 74 classes with 2,650 class enrollments.

Our programs focus on high demand careers in our region, from diesel technology, agriculture, and health sciences to cybersecurity and heavy equipment operation. No matter a student's background—whether they are the class valedictorian or someone struggling to graduate—there is a place for everyone in CTE.

I first discovered Career and Technical Education as a freshman at Dickinson High School, exploring multiple pathways, including business, welding, construction, textiles, drafting, and agriculture. However, I found my true passion through the education pathway in Family and Consumer Sciences. Courses like Intro to Teaching and Child Development set the foundation for my future, and I am now part of the first group of students in Southwest Area CTE's Certified Paraprofessional Program.

Currently, I am completing my work-based learning experience in Ms. Burk's fifth grade class at Berg Elementary, where I am gaining knowledge of everyday challenges in the classroom, but more importantly, I am receiving the opportunity to actively support students' learning. This experience has cemented my decision to pursue an elementary education degree at Dickinson State University next fall, hoping one day to have a classroom of my own.

Beyond my own experiences, I serve as the North Dakota SkillsUSA President, one of five student organizations available at Southwest Area CTE. SkillsUSA, alongside FFA, FBLA, FCCLA, and TSA, allows students to enhance leadership, technical, and professional skills that prepare us for the workforce. Today I wear my red SkillsUSA blazer but tomorrow it will be my blue corduroy FFA jacket.

I am joined today by three of my fellow Southwest Area CTE students whose experiences further highlight the real-world impact of Career and Technical Education.

- Isaac Schulte, a senior, has explored diesel technology, welding, and agriculture courses and found his passion in veterinary science. Through our Work Based Learning Program, he was placed at Circle C Veterinary Service, where he has gained hands on experience working with animals, learning diagnostic procedures, and assisting with patient care. The opportunity to apply his classroom knowledge in a real veterinary setting has helped him build confidence in his skills while developing relationships with industry professionals. Isaac plans to attend North Dakota State University for pre veterinary studies next fall, and he credits Career and Technical Education for giving him a head start on his career goals.
- Taylor Crone, a senior, followed the health science pathway, particularly in dental assisting. Through her coursework and on the job experience at Aspire Dental, she became a Nationally Board-Certified Dental Assistant this past January—an opportunity unique to the only high school dental assisting program in the state. Taylor has had the chance to work alongside experienced dental professionals, assisting with procedures and interacting with patients. The knowledge and skills she has gained allowed her to secure a paid position at Aspire Dental while still in high school. She will continue her journey this fall as she pursues a dental hygiene degree, with plans to return to North Dakota and help address the growing need for qualified dental professionals.
- Hailey Praus, a junior, has taken business, construction, diesel technology, and agriculture courses. She currently works the parts counter at West Plains, a local CASE IH and New Holland dealer, as part of her Supervised Agricultural Experience Program. Hailey is responsible for assisting customers, managing inventory, and learning about the different components that keep agricultural equipment running. As a female excelling in a traditionally male dominated industry, she is a testament to Career and Technical Education's ability to prepare students for any career path. In addition to her work experience, Hailey is a dedicated leader, serving as the Chapter Secretary for the Dickinson FFA Chapter. She is excited to continue exploring her options in the agriculture industry and is considering a future in agricultural business.

These are just four stories out of the over 26,000 students participating in Career and Technical Education across North Dakota.

Our success is a direct result of CTE funding and investment, and we need continued support to ensure these one-of-a-kind opportunities remain available. Our CTE Director, Aaron Anderson, has shared that specifically, the “Grants Secondary” line on page one, line sixteen needs to be increased to at least ten million dollars to sustain and expand Career and Technical Education programs across the state.

Additionally, \$1.5 million of expanded funding from the last biennium’s appropriations made it possible for my classmates and me to participate in Work Based Learning. Before this funding, only six percent of Dickinson High School graduates had such experiences. This year, thanks to Career and Technical Education expansion of Work-Based Learning Coordinators, over 32% of my graduating class will graduate with real world experiences. ND CTE has requested an additional \$1.5 million so expansion can take place to offer additional Work-Based Learning Coordinator positions in schools and centers around the state.

Looking ahead, enrollment requests for next year have already increased by nine percent, with over 3,100 class requests and two additional schools wanting to attend classes at SWCTE.

The momentum for Career and Technical Education is growing. Senate Bill 2019 is critical in ensuring that North Dakota students continue to have these valuable learning experiences—accelerating us into the workforce, reducing post-secondary education costs, and filling high demand jobs across the state.

On behalf of my classmates, SWCTE, and the thousands of students across North Dakota who rely on Career and Technical Education, I urge your continued and expanded support for Senate Bill 2019. Thank you for investing in us and in the future of North Dakota’s workforce. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Bailey Binstock