

**Testimony in Support of SB2019
Funding for Work-based Learning Coordinators
North Dakota State Legislature
March 12, 2025**

My name is Jerry Waagen and serve as the work-based learning coordinator for the James Valley Career and Technology Center in Jamestown. I am completing my third year in this role and observed the success of the program. I write you to share my strong support for SB2019 that seeks to allocate additional funding of Work-Based Learning (WBL) Coordinators.

WBL provides the opportunity for students to apply the knowledge they have gained in the classroom to a real-world experience. I have worked with students in variety of Career and Technical Education (CTE) areas, placing them with local businesses matching their focus area. The program is beneficial to students through hands-on learning and to businesses assisting in filling their workforce needs. A real positive for the students is the chance to try an occupation prior to committing time and money into training/college in a career they may not like. Businesses also benefit providing them the opportunity to develop a relationship with the student that could possibly become a future employee.

I have seen a number of student success stories as they participated in WBL and went on to pursue a career in that area. Students have gone on or are working on careers ranging from plumbers, electricians, child care worker, auto collision technician, and the list goes on. At the end of their WBL experience I have student complete reflection of their time. Here are just a few of their statements regarding how they grew from their experiences:

How to work with other people on a team to create something.
It helped me improve my time management and communication skills.
I have learned the most about patience, that I have never expected.
Sometimes things go the wrong way and I have learned how to fix it.
Good customer service.
Reliability and perseverance
Patience, flexibility, and compassion.

Employers appreciate the program and here are a few of their statements:

I strongly believe the WBL program is an amazing experience for the student and employer.
Good way to teach them responsibility and accountability.
Helping them understand the importance of working, being responsible, reliable, having fun, and getting paid for it.

I am completing my 40th year in education and I have seen many programs integrated into schools, some good and others not successful. After working with the work-based learning program I am a firm believer in the value of it. A key component of WBL are the coordinators who work with students and business to foster positive experiences in the real-world setting. Communication is essential for the program success. I meet with students individually during the

initial creation of the WBL and throughout the semester. I also go to the student's place of employment multiple times during the semester to check on the student progress. Businesses like having a central contact point, allowing for ease in communication. I work closely with the school counselors, and have heard many times how much they appreciate my role. School counselors have many responsibilities and it would be a challenge to effectively coordinate work-based learning.

Work-based learning is a fantastic way for schools and businesses to create partnerships that benefit students. The students will be filling our state's future workforce and the hands-on experiences they have participating in work-based learning is invaluable. Work-based learning is a win-win for businesses and students and I encourage you to support SB2019 and the additional funding for Work-based Learning Coordinators.

Sincerely,

Jerry Waagen
Work-based Learning Coordinator
James Valley Career and Technology Center