

March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Chairman Nathe and Members of the House Appropriations – Education and Environment Division:

Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I appreciate the time and commitment you dedicate to ensuring the needs of North Dakota are met. One of the most pressing challenges facing our state is addressing workforce shortages, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) plays a critical role in strengthening North Dakota's workforce pipeline.

CTE's mission is to equip students with career awareness, hands-on learning experiences, connections to post-secondary education, opportunities to obtain industry-recognized credentials, and access to work-based learning experiences in collaboration with business and industry. CTE has been — and will continue to be — an essential component of our educational system, preparing students to be *Choice Ready* and *Life Ready*. I firmly believe that CTE remains one of our state's most powerful tools in engaging, retaining, and preparing North Dakota's youth to fill the high-demand workforce needs that exist today and in the future.

As the Director of the Southeast Region Career & Technology Center (SRCTC), I am submitting written testimony in support of SB2019. Your continued support of this funding request is critical to the long-term sustainability and growth of Career and Technical Education across the state. The appropriation outlined in SB2019 will provide essential funding for maintaining existing programs, supporting workforce training, and funding new and expanding CTE programs.

#### Southeast Region CTC Enrollment

##### Data trend

Total grades 9-12 Enrollment in these schools

	Projected Fall 25- 26	Fall 24- 25	Fall 23- 24	Fall 22- 23	Fall 21- 22	Fall 20- 21	Average over 6 years
Campbell/Tintah	34	33	45	45	43	46	41
Fairmount	31	27	28	33	40	42	34
Hankinson	73	66	72	72	83	82	75
Wahpeton	369	364	371	388	407	393	382
Wyndmere	83	75	64	68	63	68	70
Colfax	85	81	81	75	72	64	76
Milnor	59	52	55	46	51	57	53
Lidgerwood	48	48	55	54	56	57	53
Oakes	152	155	154	155	154	142	152
Sgt. Central	50	45	39	51	44	41	45
Ellendale	85	80	84	97	81	84	85
Lisbon	187	182	206	207	189	189	193
N. Sgt.	71	64	63	55	58	70	64
Edgeley	68	66	67	63	72	74	68
Kulm	30	36	42	40	41	40	38
Total Students	1425	1374	1426	1449	1454	1449	1430
Rural Students	1056	1010	1055	1061	1047	1056	1048
Total CTE Credits Given	1800	1552	1778	1808	1629	1544	1685
Rural CTE Credits Given	1378	1132	1303	1358	1254	1208	1272
Average for All Students Served	1.26	1.13	1.25	1.25	1.12	1.07	1.18
Average for Rural Students Served	1.30	1.12	1.24	1.28	1.20	1.14	1.21

\*\* Filled  
the  
2 FTE's

\*\* Lost 2 FTE's - 1 in Ag & 1 in Marketing BOTH SERVED RURAL STUDENTS

As a center serving a predominantly rural student population—an average of 73.3%—our capacity for significant enrollment growth is inherently limited. To ensure we meet the evolving needs of our member schools, we actively engage with local stakeholders by attending school board meetings annually to gather input on their priorities. Additionally, we host advisory meetings to receive valuable feedback from industry partners, ensuring our programs align with workforce demands.

We are committed to listening to our communities and providing the best possible Career and Technical Education (CTE) resources for our students. A copy of the state's In-Demand Occupations list is prominently displayed in my office, serving as a guiding framework for our program offerings. Alongside our community stakeholders, this data-driven approach ensures that our CTE programs remain relevant and impactful.

We are fortunate to collaborate with North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS), allowing us to offer a wide range of dual credit courses and early entry experiences. These opportunities help students make informed career decisions, ensuring they pursue pathways they find both fulfilling and valuable.

Our center has found success in delivering opportunities that individual member schools would struggle to offer independently. By pooling resources, we maximize access to high-quality CTE experiences. We also develop and share mobile labs among schools, ensuring that innovative resources benefit all students rather than remaining underutilized. Our philosophy is to fully utilize and wear out our resources over five to eight years rather than let valuable equipment sit unused on a shelf. This collaborative, efficiency-driven model ensures that all students receive hands-on, meaningful educational experiences that prepare them for successful futures.

Over the past two years, we have witnessed significant growth in the number of new CTE Centers across the state — a direct result of the Legislature's previous investment in area career and technology centers. This investment has allowed for the expansion of CTE opportunities, ensuring that students across North Dakota, including rural communities, have access to high-quality career and technical education. However, I am increasingly concerned that the current funding level approved by the Senate does not reflect the financial needs necessary to get these new centers operational and fully staffed. The initial request from the State CTE office was for \$20 million to support new and expanding programs; however, the Senate amended that appropriation down to \$3 million. This reduction in funding significantly limits our ability to help these newly approved CTE Centers become fully operational. Without adequate funding from the State CTE Board, several new centers will struggle to open their doors or maintain consistent staffing.

As an example, our CTE Center in Wahpeton is celebrating its 52nd year of service, providing hands-on career education to over 1,700 students in southeast North Dakota annually. Our center operates in collaboration with 15 member school districts, offering high-quality career and technical training in fields such as Agriculture Education, Automotive Technology, Career Development and Counseling Services, Chef Training, Construction Technology, Diesel Technology, Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Training, Marketing, Medical Science and Health Careers, Patient Care Technician, and Welding Technology. Our work has provided a direct pipeline of skilled, workforce-ready students to North Dakota's industries, helping to fill critical employment gaps.

It is important to note that the cost of delivering CTE programming is significantly higher than that of traditional educational offerings due to the need for specialized instructors, high-cost training equipment, industry-standard certifications, and work-based learning partnerships. Additionally, the ongoing operational costs associated with launching and sustaining new CTE programs place a substantial financial burden on centers like ours. Without appropriate funding support through the New and Expanding Programs line item, we risk limiting access to CTE and failing to capitalize on the momentum created by the recent expansion of CTE centers across the state.

In 2021, the North Dakota Legislature demonstrated bold leadership by investing in the development of new CTE Centers across the state. This decision has already yielded positive results by increasing student access to CTE and addressing workforce shortages in key industries. However, the value of that investment will not be fully realized without the necessary operational funding to ensure those new centers are adequately staffed, resourced, and fully functional. The State CTE office originally requested \$20 million in the New and Expanding line item to ensure these centers could open and operate effectively. Unfortunately, the current Senate-approved a version of SB2019 that reduces the funding to \$3 million, which will leave many centers unable to fulfill their intended purpose. I urge you to fully fund the New and Expanding Programs line item to allow these centers to serve North Dakota students and employers effectively.

Investing in CTE is a direct investment in North Dakota's workforce and future economic stability. With over 18,000 job openings across the state, now is not the time to slow down the momentum that has been created through the expansion of CTE centers. The continuation of sustainable funding through SB2019 will help ensure that CTE remains a driving force in workforce development and talent retention across North Dakota.

As a member of the 69th Legislative Assembly, you have the opportunity to strengthen North Dakota's future workforce by fully supporting SB2019, specifically by restoring the \$20 million request for the New and Expanding line item. This funding is critical to ensuring that newly approved CTE Centers have the financial support needed to open their doors, hire high-quality instructors, and serve students across the state.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and ongoing commitment to investing in Career and Technical Education. I am happy to answer any questions or provide further clarification regarding the importance of this funding request. I respectfully urge your support of SB2019 and a restoration of funds to the New and Expanding line item to ensure that CTE continues to meet North Dakota's workforce needs both now and in the future.

Respectfully Submitted,



Dan Spellerberg  
CTE Director  
Southeast Region Career & Technology Center

