



Testimony for the 69th Legislative Assembly – Senate Education Committee

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Bill: Engrossed HB 1265

Chairman Beard and Members of the Senate Education Committee

My name is Andy Armacost, and I serve as the President of the University of North Dakota. I am writing to offer my strong support for Engrossed House Bil 1265 with an amendment to fund the original \$5 million requested in the original bill draft.

Artificial Intelligence is a field that involves the use of algorithms, data, and computers to help people make decisions. The use of the term “intelligence” can be off-putting to some as it implies human-like intelligence. Today, I make no such claims, but we do know that computers and smart algorithms can do things that humans cannot, and humans can certainly do many things that computers cannot.

One giant leap in AI and in how people interact with AI tools came in November 2022, with OpenAI’s launch of a tool called ChatGPT. Even before ChatGPT, in the period between the late 90s and the early 2020s, we saw development of AI tools and improvements in computing power happening at a blistering pace. Whether being used to make better decisions in medicine, transportation, image processing, or manufacturing, AI was making a real splash, even before ChatGPT. In fact, AI tools and their creators were recently awarded two Nobel Prizes for key discoveries in physics and in chemistry, which shows the impact of the field of AI.

What does this mean for North Dakota? Our industries, our state government, our workers, and our students from kindergarten through college are facing an existential challenge and opportunity. Other states are heavily investing in the development and use of AI as part of their daily work, and each day we are falling farther behind.

I participated in two major studies about how we must respond to this new world. The first began in May 2022 and was part of the North Dakota University System’s strategic planning effort called Envision 2035. The second was a state-wide task force on AI initiated by Governor Burgum, which led to the creation of two bills to help North Dakota get started. Those are HB 1448 and this bill, HB 1265.

Our ask is to invest a modest amount of funding to enable initial work across state agencies, K-12, and higher ed. This will enable the use of key tools that can support office operations, improve student education and workforce preparation, and allow us to start examining broader, enterprise-wide solutions for how our agencies and industry partners might operate more efficiently and effectively using AI. To give you a better sense of the expense, typical commercially available AI software runs \$30 per person per month. \$3 million, for example, would only fund a small fraction of the state's workforce and student body over the biennium for this pilot study. We would report back in two years with our findings and with a blueprint for continued work.

There are other important discussions happening in this Legislative Assembly regarding data centers and energy, which are two critical pieces of the AI puzzle. Yet, we must not forget the most important piece of this puzzle -- the essential task of preparing our citizenry for a world in which AI plays a role in our daily lives and in the economy of the state.

Key technology pundits and leaders continue the clarion call for action – this technology is, in fact, so game changing, that society must move forward to both adopt these technologies and to carefully examine the role of technology in support of humans and humanity.

I ask you to support the funded version of this proposal with a DO PASS vote. Thank you.