



Testimony of Jennifer Greuel
Economic Development Association of North Dakota
In Support of SB 2272
March 16, 2021

Chair Owens and members of the House Education Committee:

I am Jennifer Greuel, executive director of the Economic Development Association of North Dakota (EDND). On behalf of EDND, I ask for your support of SB 2272.

EDND represents more than 80 large and small and rural and urban economic development organizations on the front line of growing businesses and communities in North Dakota. The primary purpose of the organization is to promote the creation of new wealth throughout North Dakota to develop more vibrant communities and improve quality of life.

Although North Dakota's unemployment rate has gone up slightly due to the pandemic (4.1 percent in Dec. 2020), the state's unemployment rate is still lower than 41 other states and workforce availability remains a significant challenge facing North Dakota businesses, limiting the growth potential of the economy. North Dakota especially needs job seekers to be connected with resources and education in order to be placed in a high demand career path. EDND supports the development of workforce attraction, development and retention strategies that address the needs of the state's businesses and industries.

During the last legislative session, the ND Career Builders Scholarship and Loan Repayment Program was established to aid in the attraction and retention of individuals who attended a two- or four-year program and planned to stay and fill a high-demand job opening in our state. The scholarship program also serves the purpose of

encouraging high school students to consider these career paths more carefully with the knowledge that there will be a job waiting for them in North Dakota after graduation.

After the program was put into place last legislative session, it took a few months for the program to get up and running and a few months later COVID-19 hit. We do not believe the program has had enough time to work and we are asking the committee to consider extending the program so that it has more time to reach students. We agree with the university's request to provide funding for staffing, we believe a person needs to be dedicated to the administration and marketing of the program. We still hear from many communities and businesses that aren't yet aware of the opportunity. With time and proper marketing we are confident that this program will be of great value both to younger generations and the state.

This \$6 million investment from the state must be matched by private dollars, ensuring local businesses participate, and stretching the reach of public funds.

Please consider a do pass for SB 2272. Thank you.