



## HB 1175 – Steffes Testimony

Steffes has been headquartered in Dickinson, North Dakota since it was founded in Dickinson more than 40 years ago. We also have two facilities in Grand Forks and one in Midland, TX. Steffes is a primary sector business who manufacturers fabricated metal products in support of the oil exploration industry in North Dakota. We also manufacture component parts for heavy equipment manufacturers such as Doosan / Bobcat.

March 11, 2020 was the first reported COVID-19 case in North Dakota. In the months to follow, we navigated through what this meant for Steffes, an essential business. There were continued uncertainties on how the virus was transmitted, continuous additions to possible symptoms, and ever-changing updates and recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), North Dakota Department of Health (NDDOH), and OSHA. Our main goal throughout this entire pandemic was and continues to be keeping our employees working in a safe environment.

Like many other fellow North Dakota businesses, Steffes has been operating under our “new normal” since March 2020. Safety is a “core value” at Steffes, and as such, immediate actions were taken in March to create a COVID-19 prevention strategy as we are committed to the health and safety of our employees and visitors. This multi-layered prevention approach was created based on the recommendations from the CDC, NDDOH, and OSHA. Our major preventive strategy factors are listed below:

- 1) Communication & Awareness - consistent communication is provided to our employees with topics that include the benefits of mask wearing not only in the workplace, but also in the community; holiday guidelines and group gathering precautions; and the importance of mental health, just to name a few. A COVID-19 Steffes SharePoint site was created specifically for our employees and their family members to access all communication regarding COVID-19, such as an active case dashboard, links to the CDC and NDDOH websites, etc., as well as contact information for our Steffes Task Force members. This information is consistently updated and displayed on all breakroom televisions.
- 2) Case Management – employees who report symptoms of COVID-19 or have been identified as a close or household contact are assigned an internal HR Case Manager. When NDDOH was inundated; state contact tracers could not keep up and stopped communication with these affected individuals. Because of our internal case management process, we did not skip a beat.
- 3) Site Entry Process – all employees and visitors are required to complete our site entry process which includes standard entry questions and daily temperature checks.
- 4) Sanitization – in the Spring of 2020 any type of disinfectant was hard to find. To effectively pivot, we utilized OSHA guidance and protocols to make our own disinfectant. We put together disinfecting totes which included the disinfectant, multiple cloth rags, disposable gloves, and instructions. These totes were placed in all highly utilized areas.

- 5) Physical Distancing and Mask Usage – we started utilizing designated meeting rooms for additional break areas as well as staggered break times to reduce the number of employees in each area. All employees are required to wear a mask while at work. Because of this protocol, employees were provided with four complimentary face masks and proper laundering instructions.

Our employees' health and safety has always been our top priority; it was imperative to take quick action with the preventative strategy mentioned above. We highly encourage our employees to practice these efforts outside of work and to share our updated communications with their household members as well. As one of the largest employers in Stark County, we are committed to keeping our communities safe and help mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Currently, our Steffes total positive COVID-19 case count since March 2020 is 35, which encompasses our four locations. Our less than 10% positivity rate is highly attributed to our ever-changing workplace prevention strategy that aides to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

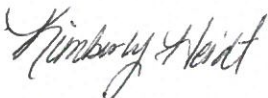
As we all navigate through these uncertain times, we must ask ourselves the question – why through the best mitigation efforts and procedures a company puts into practice to help keep employees safe, does it make sense to risk expensive lawsuits that do not help the situation and only cost citizens and employers money to litigate? In fact, all we can do as employers is implement the guidelines mentioned above. However, the moment our employees clock out, we can only hope they are practicing the same type of prevention strategies in our communities.

Even though there is still much uncertainty surrounding COVID-19; such as transmission, symptoms, infectious periods, and safeguards, we have remained diligent to routinely review and identify new data and precautions from trusted sources to make sure we are doing everything within our control to prevent workplace spread. We have updated our internal protocols 6 times so far with a 7<sup>th</sup> revision in the works to remain up to date as guidance is ever-changing.

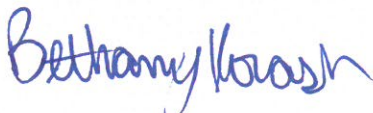
In summary, we encourage this committee to recommend “Do Pass” for HB1175 on behalf of all North Dakota businesses.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Kimberly Heidt  
VP of People & Culture



Bethany Kovash  
Environmental, Health and Safety (EHS) Manager