

Good Morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is James Leiman and I proudly serve as Director of Strategy for the North Dakota Department of Commerce. Over the last three years, I have had the distinct honor to lead amazing public and private sector teams on the attraction of Foreign Direct Investment, the deployment of an Intermodal facility in Minot and expanding trade markets into areas not previously considered due to rapidly evolving trade dynamics and patterns.

The Department of Commerce would like to present a neutral position on this bill however would like to emphasize the following:

1. Commerce has worked to attract in excess of \$3B in projects spanning energy, value-added agriculture as well as tech. In fact, it was successful in recruiting the world's largest innovation platform which introduces a minimum 40 new agricultural technology startups each year to the State of North Dakota.
2. Commerce led a dormant intermodal project which took 20 years to accomplish; this project saves ag shippers an average of 25% on their drayage cost. Considering the impacts on supply chains from COVID-19, trade conflicts and a shortage of capital in some markets, this transforms the ability for producers to make more money while outcompeting peer states and Canadian provinces.
3. Commerce continues to lead the attraction of a petrochemical industry which could yield tens of billions in foreign investment (primarily from multinational companies). Just this week, the first critical proof of concept was announced with the Bakken Midstream project being announced where flared natural gas will be converted to electrons that the region can use to support its burgeoning growth.

The Department continues to enjoy a great working relationship with elected officials, private sector partners and the NDTA board and would like to continue this fast-paced trajectory for accelerated economic resilience and growth. In addition, Commerce wishes to continue providing real-time and future focused data to most impactfully plan trade missions and the success of the business community.

We humbly request that the Commerce Department, continue to retain the role as Chief International Relations entity as this leadership will be critical in the years to come, especially as we navigate a highly complex energy economy. In addition, given its successes, Commerce requests that its role as lead state agency for the attraction of Foreign Direct Investment be retained. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with the Commissioner of Agriculture and his staff given their historic successes on trade missions, relationships across the globe, can do attitude and desire to help farmers and processors across the state. Thank you in advance for your consideration and I stand for any questions.