

Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
Chairman Holmberg
March 18, 2021

HB 1013

Chairman Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, my name is Mark Vollmer. I proudly serve as Superintendent of Minot Public School District #1 and Minot Air Force Base #160. I stand in front of you today to offer our support for HB 1013, specifically, the amendment brought forth by Senator Burckhard to allow a one-time grant of \$5.9 million from special funds made available from 2019-21 biennium carryover for the development of science experiments and STEAM education, including ADA accessible space and equipment needed for all children at a hybrid children's museum/science center in Minot.

I realize this amendment has generated a lot of excitement and hesitation, so we will do our best to keep our comments concise to ensure times for questions you may have.

Simply put, the **Magic City Discovery Center** is a state-of-the-art center to support science and technology in our community and our region. The MCDC board has worked diligently to raise funds, design an appropriate building, and develop excellent exhibits that support learning in a fun and creative manner. We are not talking about a *pie in the sky* dream or idea – the **Magic City Discovery Center** project is shovel ready, bids have been opened, and we will break ground shortly.

The **Magic City Discovery Center** will provide ample opportunity for Northwest North Dakota students to learn, first hand, how science, technology, engineering, art and math (STEAM) fit into our day to day lives and how STEAM drives our economy. The project will provide ample opportunities for children, parents, and community members to;

- Promote learning for pre-school children in the region,
- Support economic development in the region,

- Provide opportunity for Minot State University students to understand classroom pedagogy and to practice these skills in an excitement learning environment,
- Provide hands-on learning opportunities for all students in the region, through in-person visits to the **Magic City Discovery Center**, traveling exhibits, and in-person presentations at remote locations, and,
- Support the learning process for thousands of students by providing real-time learning experiences in a regional setting (Previously, our families would need to travel to Minneapolis to experience this level of interactive, science-based learning).

The funding provided through this one-time grant will enhance plans already in existence, and will provide ADA compliant outdoor learning activities to support and enhance STEAM opportunities in our region.

I have attached letters from fellow administrators in support of the Magic City Discovery Center. These administrators share in my excitement for this project.

Senator Burckhard's amendment to HB 1013 is a game-changer. I have watched as a dedicated group of volunteers have raised money, developed interactive learning opportunities for students, and took learning modules on the road (pre-COVID). In my nearly 30 years in North Dakota schools, I have never seen a more creative, innovative, or holistic community-based approach to meet the academic, social and emotional needs of our children. I encourage a "DO PASS" recommendation.

Thank you for allowing me to share our story and our plan – a plan that exemplifies community collaboration to promote success. I will stand for any questions you may have, or defer the opportunity to questions until the end of the presentation.