



**Testimony**  
**Senate Appropriations Committee**  
**HOUSE BILL NO. 1431**  
**March 31, 2021**

Chairman Holmberg and members of the Senate Finance Appropriations Committee. The Valley Prosperity Partnership (VPP) is an initiative led by business executives to advance and advocate for shared strategic economic development opportunities that will strengthen and diversify the Red River Valley region and North Dakota. Thanks to the vision of these business leaders and to public policy leaders like yourself, the legislature will have multiple proposals to consider that seek to accomplish those goals by investing state dollars into infrastructure projects.

First, we want to thank the legislature for supporting water control and supply projects that are of vital importance to the regional and state economy and to ask you to earnestly consider further financial support of these projects to bring them to completion. Flood control, via the FM Diversion project, is of the utmost importance to the economy of the Valley and the state. As everyone knows from the Grand Forks flood of 1997, business and economic productivity was impacted for years. The consensus of the business community – those making investments in the communities and creating jobs – is clear: permanent flood protection is a must not only for human safety but for economic stability and vitality. Therefore, the VPP supports the issuance of bonds to complete the important infrastructure projects included in HB 1431.

The Valley Prosperity Partnership believes that funding these water control and supply priorities is a long-term economic strategy that has statewide implications. Our CEOs firmly stand behind the need of these projects and the certainty they will provide the businesses they lead.

Workforce development has been the one of the VPP's highest priorities since its establishment in 2012. As business leaders in the Red River Valley, we believe that career workforce academies offer the specialized training that is urgently needed by employers throughout North Dakota. They will expand career and technical education and training that focuses on career pathway programs that align with industry growth clusters with the highest potential for creating growth and shared prosperity.



Collaborative efforts involving considerable financial commitments by local businesses have been underway in the Fargo region for several years; similar efforts are underway in Grand Forks. Therefore, the VPP supports an appropriation of \$60,000,000 for the department of career and technical education operating fund.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 1431, which the VPP wholeheartedly supports.



The Valley Prosperity Partnership (VPP) is focused on developing a unified, shared vision for high value and sustained economic growth for all Red River Valley residents. A steering committee of private sector industry and higher education leaders, joined by economic development partners, work to advance strategic economic development opportunities for the Red River Valley region of North Dakota and Minnesota and for the entire State of North Dakota.

Marshal Albright, President & CEO  
Cass County Electric Cooperative,  
Co-Chair, Valley Prosperity Partnership

Steve Burian, President & CEO  
Burian & Associates  
Co-Chair, Valley Prosperity Partnership

Judd Graham, CEO Fargo Region  
Bremer Bank, Vice Co-Chair

Brian Johnson, CEO  
Choice Financial Group, Vice Co-Chair

Andrew Armacost, President  
University of North Dakota

Tom Astrup, President & CEO  
American Crystal Sugar

Barry Batcheller, Chairman  
Appareo Systems

Dean Bresciani, President  
North Dakota State University

Dan Conrad, President & CEO  
Blue Cross Blue Shield North Dakota

Tim Curoe, CEO  
RD Offutt Company

Mylo Einarson, President & CEO  
Nodak Electric Cooperative

Chad Flanagan, Partner  
Eide Bailly

Shawn Gaddie, Director of Infrastructure  
Management Services  
AE2S

Jim Galloway, Principal  
JLG Architects

Keith Lund, President & CEO  
Grand Forks Region EDC

William C. Marcil, Sr. Chairman  
Forum Communications Company

Pat McAdaragh, President & CEO  
Midco

Jeff Melgaard, Vice President  
Construction Engineers

Dave Molmen, CEO  
Altru Health System

Bryan Nermoe, President  
Sanford Medical Center Fargo

Tony Grindberg, ND Principal Manager  
Xcel Energy

Joe Raso, President & CEO  
Greater Fargo Moorhead EDC

John Richman, President  
North Dakota State College of Science

Jim Roers, President & CEO  
Roers Construction & Development

Thomas Shorma, President & CEO  
WCCO Belting, Inc.

Richard Solberg, Chairman & CEO  
Bell State Bank & Trust

Steve Swiontek, Executive Chair  
Gate City Bank

David White, President  
Border States Electric

Chris Wolf, North Valley Market President  
Alerus Financial