

Testimony from Dave Farnsworth, Chair of the North Dakota Workforce Development Council to the North Dakota Senate Appropriations Committee, January 25, 2021

Thank you, Katie, for the introduction.

Chairman Holmberg and Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee:

As Chair of the North Dakota Workforce Development Council, I would like to provide some insight in the role that the Workforce Development Council serves and focus on its recommendations which the Council feels can most effectively meet the workforce needs of its citizens and advance its economy into the future.

The Workforce Development Council consists of over 30 members, with over half of its members coming from the key private sectors such as Energy, Manufacturing, Value-Added Agriculture, Suppliers, Health Care, and Information Technology. In addition, key stakeholder groups such as Higher Ed, K-12, Organized Labor, Career and Technical Education, Job Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, Commerce, and North Dakota Legislators help to make the Council a dynamic and knowledgeable team for identifying effective ways of meeting North Dakota's workforce needs.

The role of the North Dakota Workforce Development Council is 1) to advise the Governor and the State concerning the nature and extent of workforce development in the context of North Dakota's economic development needs, and 2) how to effectively meet these needs, while optimizing the use of available resources and avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort.

At the end of 2020 the Workforce Development Council issued a report in which the Council provided 13 recommendations and 2 endorsements that the Council strongly feels can help address the greatest workforce challenges that face the State of North Dakota today and in the coming years. These recommendations are built upon those issued in the Council's October 2018 report and further home in on specific actions that will have the biggest impact on addressing the State's workforce needs.

In summary, the recommendations revolved around 4 main areas of emphasis, which are included in your packet of information:

- **Earlier & More Diverse Career Exploration and Addressing the Technical Skills Gap.**
- **Remove Barriers to Employment**
- **Occupational Licensing Reform**
- **Recruitment and Retention of Workers**

In its deliberations this session, I know this Committee will be faced with a great array of requests and needs from many groups and citizens. I also know that growing and diversifying the State's economy and tax base is foremost in the Committee's mind. I would encourage the Committee members to look at those portions of the Commerce budget that will address the workforce needs the Council has identified and move them forward.

I am happy to answer any questions. [Pause for questions]. It is now my pleasure to introduce Kara Glenn of Silver Fox Pipeline and Facility Services.