

Senate Bill 2018 – 67th North Dakota Legislative Assembly
Senate Appropriations Committee, Senator Ray Holmberg, Chair

Monday, January 25, 2021

Testimony Provided By: Dr. Donna Brown, President, Turtle Mountain Community College

Good afternoon Chairman Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, my name is Donna Brown and I am President of Turtle Mountain Community College (TMCC). Thank you for affording me the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 2018, relating to workforce development for Turtle Mountain Community College.

I am here to respectfully request that the Workforce Development Grant to Turtle Mountain Community College in the amount of \$500,000 remain in the 2021-2023 Commerce Department budget.

This past biennium, we provided workforce training in Commercial Vehicle Operations (CVO), Heavy Equipment Operator (HEO), and Welding Technician programs. We also expanded our Medical Administrative Assistant (MAA) program to meet the future needs of the Tribe's recovery center, which is expected to be open in the near future. Our MAA program includes certification in coding, billing, and transcription. This is a two-year program and fifteen students are enrolled in their first year of the program, having begun in the fall of 2020.

The grant gave TMCC an opportunity to increase capacity, including building infrastructure and enhancing program offerings. Students can attain industry-recognized

certificates and degrees with a focus on stackable credentials, where students earn a sequence of credentials that can be accumulated over time and used to move along a career ladder. Intensive, customized student support is provided from intake to job placement. Additionally, funding played an important role in strengthening partnerships with business and industry resulting in programmatic alignment to jobs and increased opportunities for students to find and secure employment.

As part of building infrastructure, we purchased a 2020 Freightliner Semi for the Commercial Vehicle Operations program and a GPS control system for the Heavy Equipment Operator program. The remaining expenses included salaries & fringe benefits, supplies such as fuels & oils, student testing fees for certifications, and general maintenance of the equipment.

We have a strong emphasis on achieving results and we have a history of success in the number of students served, number of graduates, and number of placements. This past year we enrolled 24 students in the CVO program, with 9 completing and 10 employed. In the HEO program we enrolled 32 students, with 23 completing and 18 employed. Our Welding program served 26 students, with 9 completing and 8 placed in employment. In the fall of 2020 we began training students in the Medical Administrative Assistant program, with 15 students currently enrolled.

Like many other institutions of higher education, TMCC was impacted by the pandemic. Our spring courses were interrupted in March for the safety of our students. Due to this we were not able to provide the face-to-face instruction needed to complete the lab portions of courses. Once safety protocols were implemented, faculty scheduled one-

on-one and small group sessions with students into the summer to complete course requirements from spring term. Because spring courses had to be completed in the summer, we did not enroll new students for summer, which we typically do.

We utilize our Career and Technical Education Advisory Committee – our partners – to assist with feedback and continuous improvement. The Advisory Committee members are from industry, business, and labor located at the tribal, regional, and state levels.

Our graduates fulfill workforce needs in our community and beyond. For example, graduates of the Commercial Vehicle and Heavy Equipment programs were employed by the Turtle Mountain Tribal Transportation department this past summer on various road projects. Welding program graduates are employed by the Turtle Mountain Manufacturing plant. They are also employed at the Rugby Manufacturing plant and the plant is requesting more of our graduates, which is a testimony to the quality of their skills.

TMCC is well positioned to qualify for another round of state funding that focuses on continued development of some of our programs and enhancement of others. We have demonstrated our ability and capacity as a viable source for the training of individuals and helping to meet the workforce demands in North Dakota.

I recommend a “do pass” by this Committee. Thank you very much and I will entertain any questions you might have at this time.