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Testimony of Kyle Martin

Executive Director

Technology Council of North Dakota

In Support of SB 2019

January 7, 2021

Chairman Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee:

My name is Kyle Martin, executive director of the Technology Council of North Dakota (TechND). I am writing to voice support of SB 2019.

TechND was created in 2000 by North Dakota business, government and education leaders who recognized the need to strengthen the state's information technology infrastructure and reposition the state as a national leader in IT. The organization has since expanded its focus to include members from the technology industry as a whole. TechND has over 60 member organizations, with representatives from both the public and private sector.

As North Dakota weathers the COVID-19 pandemic, our reliance on technology has never been greater, compounding the need for a high-quality workforce ready to meet the technology challenges of tomorrow. By 2028, TechND anticipates 7,500 new and replacement technology workers will be needed in North Dakota. Career and technical education centers will be paramount to filling these positions by serving as a gateway to the technology sector by

providing critical skills training and exposing students to the endless career opportunities available within the technology sector.

Although North Dakota's economy has been historically strong, it has not been immune from COVID-19's economic impact. Unemployment in North Dakota as of November 2020 was 4.5 percent (up from 2.4 percent in November 2019). Nearly every industry has been impacted to an extent, resulting in career changes and layoffs. Technology-related careers provide workers with high wages, great benefits and flexibility. Career and technical education centers play a vital role in sparking the interest of tomorrow's technology workforce and providing them with skills they will utilize throughout their careers.

TechND supports the Executive Budget Recommendation of \$45 million for career and technical education centers through a competitive matching grant program. This is an opportunity for North Dakota to invest dollars today to build tomorrow's information technology workforce. Additionally, TechND would also ask the Senate Appropriations Committee to consider supporting the long-term costs of career and technical education centers through additional funding—the \$45 million bonding proposal does not include dollars to support operational costs for new centers. TechND also supports CTE's \$2 million request to restore funding back to TrainND. This program is critical to providing training for businesses and employees across North Dakota.

Since the launch of TechND's IT Career Awareness Program in 2009, CTE has been a strong partner in promoting careers to students and educators through the program. TechND and CTE have worked together to reach tens of thousands of students in dozens of communities statewide with technology education and career information.

We thank you for your support of technology education opportunities in the past and urge your support of SB 2019.