

Testimony of Donald Shilling

Senate Education Committee – January 27, 2021

Re: SB2272 – Support

Chairman Schaible and Committee Members

Good Morning

My name is Donald Shilling. I am here to testify as Chairman of General Equipment & Supplies, Inc and as a member of the ND Workforce Development Council in support of SB2272.

First, I would like to say THANK YOU for the original HB 1171 from last session that became ND Career Builder! Matching the needs and the dollars of the private sector with a responsible State Government Program.

General Equipment & Supplies, Inc is a ND Corporation with locations in Fargo, Bismarck, Minot and Williston, ND. We have probably used ND Career Builder in the past year more than any other single company. We have three graduates of NDSCS using the Tuition Reimbursement Program and one student who is using the Scholarship Program. We also have four students scheduled to use the Tuition Reimbursement Program when they graduate this coming May.

As a member of the ND Workforce Development Council our sub-committee was responsible for reviewing this program. We recommended to the full Workforce Development Council that it be endorsed by the Council and recommend it be continued.

As a member of the Workforce Development Council we would love for this this program to be better utilized where more Citizens of ND and Businesses in ND were made aware of ND Career Builders existence and would thus find a way to participate in ND Career Builder.

ND Career Builder can be a game changer to retain our youth in ND by providing a pathway to develop a skilled technical “high demand” career and receive support from the private sector to help pay for that education. ND Business would also hire and retain these skilled graduates and fill their now vacant positions with qualified workforce candidates.

Of course, after careful review and discussion we can also say our impact with this program could be greatly enhanced by devoting additional appropriation of resources to the promotion of this program. Right now, it is North Dakota’s best kept secret!

How do we better engage both the business sector and potential students? Simply put, presently there is not an easy way for the private sector and the student to “connect”. How can an 18-year-old high school student find a business willing to sponsor them? As a small business in ND how do you find a student that is willing and wants to learn the skills your business needs?

These are tough questions, but we must try and provide the resources that can bring the two together. Perhaps a joint effort of the ND University System (who is administering the program now) and the Commerce Department who connects with ND business, can find solutions.

Our company did it because we have a full-time recruiter to help us fill the skilled positions in our business. But many small ND businesses do not have the size or resources to have a recruitment strategy, thus an easier pathway must be found to engage ND small business. Students could be and should be hearing about this program during Technical School visits or from a Career or Guidance Counselors.

To sum up, by increasing the set aside for administration and promotion ND Career Builder could be more effective and better utilized, which bottom line provides ND with more filled skilled careers positions and retention of our youth in high paying jobs in ND.

Again, Thank You for ND Career Builder!

I would be more than happy to offer our help in any way we can to find this solution. I would also be more than happy to answer any questions you have at the present time.