



HB 1175 – Steffes Testimony

Steffes has been headquartered in Dickinson, North Dakota since it was founded more than 40 years ago. We also have two facilities in Grand Forks and one in Midland, TX. Steffes is a primary sector business who manufacturers fabricated metal products in support of the oil exploration industry in North Dakota. We also manufacture component parts for heavy equipment manufacturers such as Doosan / Bobcat.

March 11, 2020 was the first reported COVID-19 case in North Dakota. In the months to follow we navigated through what this meant for Steffes, an essential business. There were continued uncertainties on how the virus was transmitted, continually additions to possible symptoms, and ever-changing updates and recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), North Dakota Department of Health (NDDOH), and OSHA. Our main goal throughout this entire pandemic was and continues to be - keeping our employees working in a safe environment.

Like many other fellow North Dakota businesses, Steffes has been operating under our “new normal” since March 2020. Safety is a “core value” at Steffes and as such immediate actions were taken in March to create a COVID-19 prevention strategy as we are committed to the health and safety of our employees and visitors. This multi-layered prevention approach was created based on the recommendations from the CDC, NDDOH, and OSHA. Our major preventive strategy factors are listed below:

- 1) Communication & Awareness - consistent communication is provided to our employees with topics that include the benefits of mask wearing not only in the workplace but also in the community, holiday guidelines and group gathering precautions, the importance of mental health and that is just to name a few. A COVID-19 Steffes SharePoint site was created specifically for our employees and their family members to access all communication regarding COVID-19, active case dashboard, links to websites such as CDC, NDDOH, etc., as well as contact information for our Steffes Task Force members. This information is consistently updated and displayed on all breakroom televisions.
- 2) Case Management – employees who report symptoms of COVID-19 or have been identified as a close or household contact are assigned an internal HR Case Manager. When NDDOH was inundated; state contact tracers could not keep up and stopped communication with these affected individuals – because of our internal case management process we did not skip a beat.

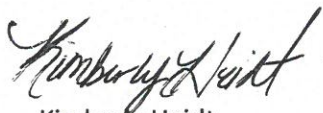
- 3) Site Entry Process – every employee and visitor completes our site entry process which includes standard entry questions and temperature checks daily.
- 4) Sanitization – in the Spring of 2020 any type of disinfectant was hard to find – to effectively pivot – we utilized OSHA guidance and protocols making our own disinfectant. We put together disinfecting totes – which included the disinfectant, multiple cloth rags, disposable gloves, and instructions – these totes were placed in all highly utilized areas.
- 5) Physical Distancing and Mask Usage – we started utilizing designated meeting rooms for additional break areas as well as staggered break times to reduce the number of employees in each area. All employees are required to wear a mask while at work- because of this protocol, employees were provided with four complimentary face masks and proper laundering instructions.

Our employees' health and safety is our top priority – it was imperative to take quick action with the preventative strategy mentioned above. We highly encourage our employees to practice these efforts outside of work and to share our updated communications with their household members as well. As one of the largest employers in Stark County – we are committed to keeping our communities safe and help mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

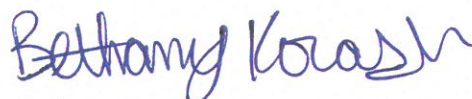
As we are all navigating through these times of uncertainty – we must ask ourselves the question – why through the best mitigation efforts and procedures a company puts into practice to help keep employees safe – does it make sense to risk expensive lawsuits that do not help the situation and only cost citizens and employers money to litigate? When in fact, all we can do as employers is implement the guidelines mentioned above – but the second our employees clock out – we can only hope they are practicing the same type of prevention strategies in our communities.

Even though there is still much uncertainty regarding COVID-19 regarding transmission, symptoms, infectious periods, and safeguards, we have remained diligent to routinely review and identify new data and precautions from trusted sources to make sure we are doing everything within our control to prevent workplace spread. We have updated our internal protocols 7 times so far with an 8th revision in the works to remain up to date as guidance is everchanging.

In summary, we encourage this committee to recommend “Do Pass” for HB1175 on behalf of all North Dakota businesses.



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