

TESTIMONY OF

Shawn Kessel , COO/Deputy Commissioner, ND Department of Commerce

Chairman Monson and members of the Government Operations Division of the House Appropriations committee, my name is Shawn Kessel, and I have the privilege to serve as the COO/Deputy Commerce Commissioner for the ND Department of Commerce.

The North Dakota Department of Commerce is pleased to provide this statement of support for the North Dakota Business Gateway project being led by North Dakota Information Technology.

North Dakota businesses are currently faced with several time-consuming obstacles when engaging with state agencies for business-related services. This is due to the fact, that our state does not have a universal website portal in place that would allow businesses to conduct correspondences, access resources, and make payments and transactions with all state agencies within one location, all under one account. Many businesses have expressed the desire for a single sign-on option, access to growth opportunities, step-by-step guidance, and more business-related notifications.

The North Dakota Business Gateway would streamline processes and reduce unnecessary red tape for business owners and supporting agencies by providing a single online experience for establishing, maintaining, and growing a business in North Dakota. More than 40,000 businesses would benefit from the efficiencies created by the gateway, which would result in annual savings of at least \$5 million statewide. Additionally, supporting agencies would experience an improvement in communication as the gateway would allow data sharing across all participants; thus, creating a single stream of work for businesses.

As we continue efforts in expanding our state's economy, we must look for avenues that will not only attract businesses but also retain and encourage current business. The North Dakota Business Gateway is a pro-business move that will grow our state's economy by making North Dakota an efficient place to conduct business.

We appreciate your consideration for this important resource to support our current and future businesses.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input and I'll stand for any questions the committee may have.