



---

2400 47<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Grand Forks, ND 58201 [Phone 701-787-4872](tel:701-787-4872) [Fax 701-787-4351](tel:701-787-4351) [Email gfactc@mygfschools.org](mailto:gfactc@mygfschools.org) [Website www.gfareactc.org](http://www.gfareactc.org)

---

January 17, 2023

Chairman Vigesaa and Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

Good morning, my name is Eric Ripley, Executive Director of Career & Technical Education (CTE) for the Grand Forks Public Schools and Director of the virtual Grand Forks Area Career & Technology Center. It also has been my professional honor to help lead the planning efforts of the Career Impact Academy for the Grand Forks region.

In December, 2021 the efforts of our community-led project, which included financial commitment from over 70 industry partners, 42 community leaders serving on various committees, and thousands of volunteer hours, resulted in a 250+ page application with a cover letter signed by the Mayor of Grand Forks, Grand Forks County Chair, President of the Grand Forks Region EDC, President of the Chamber of Commerce, President of the Grand Forks Public School Board, and Grand Forks Public Schools' Superintendent showcasing the unified support for the Career Impact Academy.

On March 14, 2022, the State Board of Career and Technical Education approved the Career Impact Academy application to receive \$10 million dollars from the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund, along with support and funding commitments for 12 other CTE center applications from across the state. Since that March date to today, all 13 approved CTE center projects have been waiting for 310 days, and counting, for the approved matching funds to be released by the U.S. Department of Treasury.

The extended delay in funding has affected both the projected timeline and budget for the Career Impact Academy. Our facility, since a building does not already exist, involves new construction versus remodeling an existing structure. Our original design efforts were preparing for a Fall, 2022 bid package to take advantage of the Spring, 2023 construction season. In addition, our project's budget is dealing with the combination of cost increases to building materials seen by all capital projects, combined with the inflationary increases incurred over the several months of funding delays.

With HB1199, I applaud our state's willingness to immediately address the delays in the matching funds for the approved CTE center applications. This bill serves as a positive step forward in allowing the projects to regain momentum in the collective efforts to expand and provide high quality CTE programs for our respective regions. I would respectfully ask the Committee provide a DO PASS recommendation and when the discussion regarding additional funds for the CTE centers to address cost overruns and inflationary costs emerges before this committee, to be equally as supportive.

Within the Grand Forks region, we see the Career Impact Academy as a critical component for addressing the workforce needs for our region and state. Passage of HB1199 brings our community project closer to reality.

Sincerely,

Eric Ripley  
Executive Director of CTE & Technology  
Grand Forks Public Schools  
Grand Forks Area Career & Technology Center