



Honorable Don Vigessa
House Appropriations
600 East Boulevard
Bismarck, ND 58505-0360

January 18, 2023

RE: Letter of Support for House Bill 1199

Dear Chairman Rep. Don Vigessa,

Fifty-three counties in North Dakota. Of those, not one has reported an active resume rate greater than one within the past year, according to the North Dakota Labor Market Information Center. As of December 2022, there were more than 10 active resumes for every one job posted online - a statistical representation of an issue plaguing businesses statewide: a severe workforce shortage.

In Williston alone, three restaurants closed in 2022 due to the lack of labor. Rig counts are down, daycares are struggling, quality of service is suffering, employees are overworked, company growth is stifled, quality of education is hindered, and investment is obstructed. But the impacts of the workforce shortage go beyond the walls of a business, the boundaries of a city, and the confines of a region – they have statewide implications. Bottom line: income and growth across the board are constrained without an adequate workforce.

People are a company's most valuable asset, and this is a stark reminder of that truth. Therefore, we must look at new ways to invest in people. The installation of Career and Technical Education centers across the state is an opportunity to invest in North Dakotans.

A delay in federal funding has delayed construction of these centers – including one in Williston, for which \$10 million was earmarked. In the meantime, labor and material costs have increased, inflating projects costs. Today, we have the chance to fill those gaps with funding from the Bank of North Dakota until that federal money comes through, avoiding more costly delays.

Introducing CTE centers and the hands-on training they provide would give our students more satisfaction, access to new, in-demand skills – such as UAS (unmanned aircraft systems) operations and advancements in the oil and gas industry here in northwestern North Dakota – and fast-track their entry into the workforce in their own communities. Investing in their futures is investing in North Dakota's long-term success.

The Williston Area Chamber of Commerce (WACC) supports House Bill 1199 and encourages its passage. Thank you for considering funding that has the potential to save businesses, encourage growth and opportunity, increase the state's bottom line, and change lives.

Sincerely,

Anna Nelson
President
Williston Area Chamber of Commerce