



FMWF Chamber Support for HB 1199

01/18/2023

Chairman Vigesaa and members of the House Appropriations Committee:

For the record, my name is Shannon Full, and I have the pleasure of serving as the President/ CEO of the Fargo Moorhead West Fargo (FMWF) Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber's mission is to be a catalyst for economic growth and prosperity for businesses, members, and the greater community. On behalf of our over 1,900 members, I respectfully offer testimony in support of House Bill 1199, with Representative Swiontek's friendly amendment.

Every state across the United States is competing to attract, retain, and develop workforce, hoping to fill thousands of open jobs. To effectively compete on a global scale for workforce, both the public and private sectors must identify innovative and multi-pronged solutions to address this crisis. While workforce attraction is a major focus, we must not diminish the importance of development and retention. A recent report by the National Association of State Chambers estimated that about 25% of future jobs are likely to require a four-year college degree, while 40%-50% will be middle-skill jobs requiring some post-high school education or training. Additionally, 30%-40% of adult workers will need reskilling every decade. Communities across the state of North Dakota must remain committed to developing the current and future workforce. A project like the Cass County Career Innovation Center (CIC) is a key example of our community's commitment to establishing robust workforce pathways for individuals.

A major component of this community-oriented project is the steadfast support throughout our business community. Nearly 13 million dollars of the committed contributions were derived from private businesses. From construction to healthcare and numerous industries in between, business leaders throughout Cass County stepped up to financially support this project, recognizing its need and future impact. Naturally, The FMWF Chamber found it imperative to support this project from its inception.

In July 2021, I had the pleasure of joining other community leaders from the region to break ground on Cass County's shovel-ready Career Innovation Center. This momentous occasion kicked off the start of phase 1 of the project, which establishes the building's exterior shell and launches limited programming, funded by over 21 million dollars in public and private contributions. Phase 2 of the project would then expand the interior build-out of the building and establish additional programming, utilizing the 10 million dollars allocated during the special session. Finally, Phase 3 of the project would fully build out the entire 115,000+ sq. ft. space and finalize all programming aspects, should we be fortunate enough to receive inflationary impact funds, as recommended in the governor's budget recommendation. Access to the previously allocated 10 million dollars, with Rep. Swiontek's amendment, is crucial to this project's progression.

On behalf of our members, I would like to thank the committee for their time and consideration this morning.

Respectfully,

Shannon Full
President/CEO
FMWF Chamber of Commerce
sfull@fmwfchamber.com