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## **House Bill 1232**

### **Testimony of Brady Pelton**

#### **House Appropriations Committee**

**January 25, 2023**

Chairman Vigesaa and members of the House Appropriations Committee, my name is Brady Pelton, Vice President and General Counsel for the North Dakota Petroleum Council (“NDPC”). The North Dakota Petroleum Council represents more than 550 companies involved in all aspects of the oil and gas industry, including oil and gas production, refining, pipeline, transportation, mineral leasing, consulting, legal work, and oilfield service activities in North Dakota. I stand today in support of House Bill 1232.

This bill requests an appropriation to the Career and Technical Education Department that will provide an extremely valuable tool in both building career awareness in the youth of North Dakota and allowing those just beginning their careers or already in the workforce to explore career opportunities in an interactive and meaningful way. Children need to be introduced to career options at an early age. Each student has unique interests, aptitudes, and skills that can be explored and developed while they learn about potential jobs available in North Dakota. Sparking interest in a career field at an early age is very likely to make a significant difference in an industry’s ability to hire the next generation of workers. Employers within the oil and gas industry are currently challenged with a workforce shortage, and the funds proposed in House Bill 1232 will help capture the attention of students exploring future career options.

The North Dakota Petroleum Foundation, which facilitates oil and gas industry education and outreach programs across the region, currently sponsors a program known as “Tools, Trades, Torque, Tech” or “T4.” The T4 program features interactive and hands-on summits where middle school and high school students throughout North Dakota communities are introduced to workforce skills, needs, training, and networking opportunities with industry leaders and technicians. This hands-on workforce development program for youth currently reaches several hundred students per year. However, it is limited in its reach due to constraints on available volunteer presenters and schools willing to participate.

Virtual learning can supplement the oil and gas industry's efforts in offering these important career exploration opportunities. Not only will VR options save time and money, but these options can also reach more students without the need to find new facilitators or deal with travel or safety concerns. Our goal is to increase the awareness that quality, high-paying oil and gas jobs are available, show career explorers what workers do within various career areas, and demonstrate that students eager to join the workforce can pursue a fulfilling career in an industry that is viable and necessary for our nation's security and economic future.

Thank you for the opportunity to share information with you today. We are excited about the potential of using career exploration software to help our members recruit new workers and to encourage students to consider a career in oil and gas. We respectfully urge the Committee to give House Bill 1232 a favorable Do Pass recommendation.