House Education
HB1398

February 14, 2023

Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee, for the record my name is Wayde Sick, State Director for the Department of Career and Technical Education. I am submitting testimony in support for HB1398.

The State Board for Career and Technical Education has discussed this topic at length and on January 23rd, at the Board's last meeting, it voted unanimously to provide its support of HB1398.

As stated, the State Superintendent was tasked to collaborate with stakeholders to determine how to best integrate computer science and cybersecurity into elementary, middle, and high school curriculum. By requiring schools to include this instruction, the state is addressing a few very important issues. First, by providing students instruction throughout their K12 education and starting early, we are able to help students stay safe while online. Instruction could include what to trust while online and how to identify and avoid potential attacks. Secondly, as technology continues to influence more of lives, all workers will need to have a certain level of digital literacy to be able to perform their work responsibilities. From healthcare to construction to teaching, digital literacy is

necessary. These skills are not just for those individuals that are pursuing a career in Computer Science, Cybersecurity, or Information Technology. You may have seen this for yourself last week in Memorial Hall, where several CTE programs from across the state were here to share their programs with you. Finally, providing digital literacy education at an early age can get students on a career path in IT. As of today, there are 689 vacant computer jobs listed on Job Service North Dakota's website, including telecommunications, technology coordinators and engineers. We know this is not an all-inclusive list as not all jobs are posted and many times, multiple open positions are listed in one job posting. Students don't know what they don't know, and by providing them exposure to these skills, we may open their eyes and spark an interest in these in demand, high skill, and high wage occupations. This awareness may drive more students to enroll in Information Technology programs while in high school and ultimately pursue post-secondary opportunities that lead to careers in technology. You can have the opportunity to see students on this career path compete at Cyber Madness, this Thursday and Friday, at the National Energy Center of Excellence on the Bismarck State College campus.

To close, the North Dakota State Board for Career and Technical is supportive of HB1398 and encourages a do pass recommendation.

This concludes my testimony; I will stand for any questions you may have.