House Education Committee – HB1398

February 14th, 2023

Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee, my name is Greg Hoffman, and I am the Deputy CIO for North Dakota Information Technology. I am here today in support of HB1398.

Technology is transforming virtually every job, every sector, every industry. As this transformation drives demand for a highly skilled workforce, North Dakota's goal is to organically grow the next generation of computer science and cybersecurity professionals, while simultaneously growing our economy and helping set students up for success with 21st-century skills.

In January 2018, North Dakota kicked off the PK-20W Initiative with the goal of "Every Student. Every School. Cyber Educated." This robust ecosystem includes leaders from PK-12, higher education, state agencies, business and industry, workforce development, military and local and national strategic partners. Also in 2018, North Dakota became the "First Certified State Training Partner in the Nation" for Cyber.org which is funded by Homeland Security and whose curriculum is used for teacher training.

NDIT's EduTech division currently offers 7 online computer science and cybersecurity courses for teachers to go at their own pace utilizing the curriculum from Cyber.org. To date, EduTech has trained 261 educators that have received their credentials in computer science and cybersecurity. By Fall of 2023 we are on target to virtualize the Center for Distance Education Cybersecurity content, still partnering with CYBER.org for a High School course, which will help ND schools be able to offer computer science and cybersecurity content without qualified high school teachers. This brings the content to the students and allows teachers time to obtain their certification. EduTech utilizes content not only from Cyber.org, but also Microsoft Minecraft and Code.org, all of which aligns with computer

science and cybersecurity state standards as well as national standards. Most recently, EduTech has partnered with Cisco Networking Academy for their skills-to-job program called Skills for All. As of July 2022, North Dakota is the first state in the nation to provide these courses statewide at no cost to all residents.

In the 21st century, nearly every job in every industry is a computer job. Computer science and cybersecurity are foundational skills that can empower students, teachers and parents to protect themselves online in an increasingly digital world, learn valuable problem-solving skills and prepare for many career opportunities.