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January 26, 2023

Chairman Bekkedahl and Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee:

My name is Eric Ripley, Executive Director of Career & Technical Education (CTE) for the Grand Forks Public Schools and Director of the virtual Grand Forks Area Career & Technology Center. I am communicating my support for HB1199, and how this bill will positively impact the Career Impact Academy for the students within the Grand Forks region.

In December, 2021 the efforts of our community-led project, which included financial commitment from over 70 industry partners, 42 community leaders serving on various committees, and thousands of volunteer hours, resulted in a 250+ page application with a cover letter signed by the Mayor of Grand Forks, Grand Forks County Chair, President of the Grand Forks Region EDC, President of the Chamber of Commerce, President of the Grand Forks Public School Board, and Grand Forks Public Schools' Superintendent showcasing the unified support for the facility.

On March 14, 2022, the State Board of Career and Technical Education approved the Career Impact Academy application to receive \$10 million dollars from the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund, along with support and funding commitments for 12 other CTE center applications from across the state. Since that March date to today, all 13 approved CTE center projects have been waiting for 322 days, and counting, for the approved matching funds to be released by the U.S. Department of Treasury.

The extended delay in funding has affected both the projected timeline and budget for the Career Impact Academy. Our project's budget is dealing with cost increases to building materials and supply chain challenges seen by all capital projects, combined with the inflationary increases incurred over the several months of funding delays. This dynamic is not unique to the Career Impact Academy, but consistent in every other approved CTE center project. It will be the combination of HB1199, along with additional financial support through HB1019, that would allow the statewide CTE projects to fully deliver on what was approved within our respective applications submitted over a year ago.

With HB1199, I applaud our state's willingness to immediately address the delays in the matching funds for the approved CTE center applications. This bill serves as a positive step forward in allowing the projects to regain momentum in the collective efforts to expand and provide high quality CTE programs for our respective regions. I would respectfully ask the Committee provide a DO PASS recommendation and when the discussion regarding additional funds for the CTE centers to address cost overruns and inflationary costs emerges before this committee, to be equally as supportive.

Within the Grand Forks region, we see the Career Impact Academy as a critical component for addressing the workforce needs for our region and state. Passage of HB1199 brings our community project closer to reality.

Sincerely,

Eric Ripley
Executive Director of CTE & Technology
Grand Forks Public Schools
Grand Forks Area Career & Technology Center