

Chairman Elkin and members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Patrick Bertagnolli, and I am the Executive Director for Job Service North Dakota. I am here today in support of HB1398.

I have been a member of the Workforce Development Council (The Council) since 2014 and continue to serve on this committee in my current capacity as Executive Director of Job Service North Dakota. Through the work on The Council, we have supported the need for digital literacy for all citizens of North Dakota. Additionally, as a member of the State Board for Career and Technical Education, I have also been involved in discussions related to this topic and voted to support HB1398.

Job Service North Dakota Workforce Centers often see job seekers and Unemployment Insurance claimants with barriers to employment, including lack of basic computer knowledge and skills. They often don't understand the basic computer hardware, such as a mouse or keyboard. Additionally, navigating a website, using email, or filling out job applications is often foreign to some of these customers.

Twenty-First Century skills are necessary for students and future job seekers to be prepared for the workforce. Computer Science and specifically Cybersecurity instruction impact all industries in North Dakota from Ag to Energy. Regardless of the industry or career choice, there are typically job requirements for some form of technology knowledge and skill. It is critical for students to be equipped with these skills to navigate in today's workforce. The earlier we can reach students and the more we can continue to educate them on their learning journey as it relates to Computer Science and Cybersecurity instruction, will only improve their employability upon graduation.