



WESTERN DAKOTA ENERGY ASSOCIATION

January 18, 2023

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Testimony of:

Geoff Simon, Lobbyist #144
in support of HB 2197 – Re-energize North Dakota scholarships
Senate Education Committee

Chairman Elkin and Committee members:

On behalf of the city, county and school district members of the Western Dakota Energy Association (WDEA), we wish to express our strong support for SB 2197 to establish a scholarship program that would help to address the pressing needs for workers in the oilfields of western North Dakota. For the committee's information, the members of our association are "in the game," offering multiple \$1,000 scholarships annually to students pursuing an energy-related career in North Dakota.

Anyone who's been following recent developments in the Bakken understands the No. 1 constraint on enhancing oil production is the ability to develop and attract workforce. The provisions of SB 2197 are sufficiently broad to address the education and training needs of virtually every high-demand job in the oilpatch. Applying eligibility for scholarship applicants to any institution under the authority of the Board of Higher Education means the benefits of the legislation could be realized by anyone from a graduate student in Petroleum Engineering, to students in a short-term training program that produces skilled workers in welding or diesel technology.

From the feedback we've received, the most common point made by employers regarding workforce development is that training opportunities must be convenient, flexible, affordable, and above all, local. There is no doubt students who received their education hundreds of miles from the heart of the Bakken have returned to work in the oilfields, but the odds are much greater if the education/training is closer to home.

The establishment of a Re-Energize North Dakota scholarship fund will be a valuable workforce development and attraction tool. WDEA urges the Senate Education Committee to approve a unanimous Do Pass on SB 2197, and to send it on to the Senate Appropriations Committee for further consideration.

As always, we appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony and would be happy to provide additional details upon request.

Thank you for your consideration.

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