

Chairman Wobbema and members and of the Senate Workforce Development Committee, my name is Patrick Bertagnolli, and I am the Executive Director for Job Service North Dakota. I am submitting testimony in support of HB1232.

I have been a member of the Workforce Development Council (The Council) since 2014 and continue to serve on The Council in my current capacity as Executive Director of Job Service North Dakota. Through the work on The Council, we have supported earlier and more diverse career exploration for youth and the need to create a consistent and integrated approach to career exploration. The Council also has a responsibility to ensure collaboration and alignment between students, educators, and employers in North Dakota.

In the Job Service North Dakota Appropriations testimony, I provided examples of how our Workforce Centers conduct outreach throughout the state. These outreach events include Career Fairs, High School outreach, Girl Scout Events, Tribal Reservations, the Department of Corrections, and many more. As an additional tool to help connect job seekers to careers in North Dakota, we entered into a contract with Be More Colorful for two of the Virtual Reality Career Viewers and have been using the viewers at these events for almost a year. These viewers are also used within the Workforce Centers when not slated for an event.

The use of the viewers offers individuals an opportunity to experience careers they may not otherwise have access to due to barriers and limitations such as safety and security concerns, transportation, or invitations to visit a worksite. When paired with North Dakota's In-Demand Occupation list, the Career Viewer would be an asset to the educational community to offer more diverse career exploration and exposure to students.