



Northwest Tire

Locations in Bismarck, Bowman, Dickinson, Grand Forks, Jamestown, Mandan, Mapleton, Minot, West Fargo, Williston ND, Bemidji and Fergus Falls MN, and Brandon SD.

March 6, 2023

To Chairman Wobbema and the Senate Workforce Development Committee:

I'm Dan Pearson and I serve as the President of Northwest Tire and as an Executive Committee board member on the Greater North Dakota Chamber of Commerce. Northwest Tire is a North Dakota business founded over 45 years ago. We have retail outlets across North Dakota in the communities of Bismarck, Bowman, Dickinson, Grand Forks, Jamestown, Mandan, Minot, Williston, and West Fargo. We also own retread operations in Minot and Dickinson and tire warehouses in Dickinson and Mapleton. In addition to our extensive North Dakota presence, we also own, operate, and support multiple locations in neighboring states. I am writing to express my support for HB 1232.

Our business and the tire industry as a whole are facing a substantial workforce shortage. While many industries face this issue, the problem we face is a bit more nuanced because of a complete lack of awareness of everything that goes into getting tires onto your vehicle. When I ask people what they think they would do if employed at Northwest Tire, the response 99 times out of 100 is "change tires." The reality is that while we do employ tire techs, we also employ automotive service techs, alignment technicians, inside sales representatives, truck drivers, warehouse staff, retread techs, accountants, customer service techs, marketing personnel, and much more. Each of the roles in our company is an opportunity to have a successful and progressive career in the tire industry. The misperception about limited career opportunities is one of the biggest challenges we need to overcome to develop our workforce.

We have spent many years and countless hours working to re-form the narrative and get people thinking about a career with Northwest Tire as a lifelong opportunity with room for advancement. Our efforts have resulted in some success but we still struggle with a perception issue because when people think about tires, they think about their own experience with them, which 99% of the time is just scheduling rotations and purchasing replacements. We would love to be able to bring people in to see our operations, but the logistics of coordinating on-site visits at scale just don't work.

Last year, we had an opportunity to try something different. Our team invested in creating a series of virtual tour experiences and virtual reality videos that allow us to share more about our facilities and available careers, bringing students and job seekers into our locations to

observe the variety of roles we employ through interactive digital walk-throughs. We recently implemented the experiences on our website and are eagerly seeking opportunities to make our experiences more accessible to students and career seekers in the markets we serve. We are excited to make direct connections with schools and are incredibly optimistic about the opportunity HB 1232 presents, allowing our investment to also become much needed career experiences used in classrooms across the state.

Our workforce problem is not going anywhere anytime soon and its time to get innovative with the solutions we take. Virtual reality technology is an affordable, effective, and safe way to present jobs in industries like ours to help educate and inform about the great lifelong careers students can pursue here at home. Supporting HB 1232 also supports companies like ours who are heavily invested in the growth and success of North Dakota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Pearson", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dan Pearson

President

Northwest Tire