

**Testimony of Dr. Cory Steiner, Superintendent of Northern Cass School District and Mackenzie Tadych, Director of College, Career, and Life Readiness**

**HB 1232: Support of Funding for an Appropriation within the Career and Technical Education Budget**

**Thursday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

Chairman Wobbema and members of the Senate Workforce: It is my privilege to submit testimony in support of HB 1232 for an appropriation of \$500,000 within the Career and Technical Education budget for \$500,000 to create a partnership with CareerViewXR.

My name is Dr. Cory J. Steiner and I'm the Superintendent of Schools at Northern Cass School District in Hunter, North Dakota. My name is Mackenzie Tadych, Director of College, Career, and Life Readiness for the Northern Cass School District. Northern Cass is a PK-12 district with 690 learners located 25 miles northwest of Fargo. We are an innovative school district which is in the midst of a transformation to personalized, competency-based learning.

The issues in education are profound, but more importantly, they are urgent. The structure and function of our schools today must change to meet the needs of a world which is changing at an exponential rate. Every system is designed to get the results it gets. Our system is getting the results it is supposed to get.

Unfortunately, what is being asked of schools has changed dramatically since the design of the system. In schools, we have been tasked to prepare learners to be productive members of society. We have been asked to prepare learners for college, career, and military. We are asked to prepare learners of today for jobs that don't exist while also making sure learners have the skills for jobs in the workplace now. We must develop academic, social, and emotional skills while developing long-lasting relationships in a safe environment. In other words, we must prepare learners to be choice ready for the future. The list of important things to do and accomplish is never-ending.

To address workforce shortages, schools must increase opportunities for career exploration and skill development. Learners in our districts are exposed to career exploration and skill development. However, it is not done with fidelity across our state due to a lack of resources. However, the most significant barrier for a majority of schools is distance. We have seen benefits of CareerViewXR across all grade levels. We have 4 virtual reality headsets and 2 traveling carts for high school, middle school, and elementary levels to utilize in their classes. One headset

is set up in the media center for learners to use at their convenience. The virtual experiences have opened learners' eyes to careers they did not know existed as well as created interest and a deeper understanding of careers. It allows learners to see the career first-hand and opens doors to connecting them to real professionals in the community which leads to a deeper level of understanding. Through a partnership with CareerViewXR, learners will have an opportunity no matter the school they attend to be exposed to authentic career exploration at all levels. This appropriation is about equity for all North Dakota learners.

As part of this testimony, I want to share some of the reflections from our learners. A senior learner said, "I think that the VR job shadows are a great opportunity for students that may not be able to actually shadow a career they are interested in. The VR job shadows allow for students to explore career choices if they are not sure about what they want to go into. By having the virtual aspect, the job shadows are more personal and real-life than just watching video about what the workers in those fields actually do." Another senior said, "'It is pretty neat how I could be out on a wind turbine and back in school in seconds.'" Finally, a sophomore stated, "It was surreal, thinking I could just witness a day-in-the-life of my possible future career. I wish I had more experience with it, or had access to it earlier, because knowing for sure what kind of things I'd do in so many different careers would help me figure out what I wanted to do so much quicker." The impact this is having on our learners is significant and I can only imagine the impact it could have if every learner in our state had access to this authentic experience.

I understand the financial commitment for this aspect of the bill is significant. However, I believe the negative impact by not doing this is far greater. By supporting funding for this partnership, the legislature will begin addressing the workforce shortage by investing in our PK-12 schools and learners. I ask for a 'do pass' on HB 1232 and further support for this appropriation.

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