



HB1241

Senate Workforce Development Committee

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Chair Wobbema and members of the Senate Workforce Development Committee, my name is Lisa Johnson, and I serve as the Vice Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs for the North Dakota University System. I am here today on behalf of the North Dakota University System to provide testimony in support of HB1241.

This bill, proposed by Rep. Schreiber-Beck with support from eleven additional legislators has been referred to as the Workforce Innovation Program. The additional funds enable the public colleges and universities of the state to expand their program offerings to support not only the immediate skilled workforce needs of in-demand programs of study, but also emerging programs for which demand has not yet peaked in our state or region.

As you can see, the bill permits funds to be used for the development of new curriculum, the purchase of equipment and technology, modification of facilities and equipment installation, hiring and/or training of faculty, and promotion of new programs. If HB1241 were approved, the funds provide much needed financial support to campuses who are in various stages of collaboration with their respective K-12 educational partners to support CTE centers in Bismarck, Dickinson, Fargo, Grafton, Grand Forks, Jamestown, Mandan, Minot, Valley City, Wahpeton, and Watford City.

One of the things that campuses have struggled with when developing new programs is the lag time in the funding formula that can be up to two years before they even see any state funds through recognition of completed credit hours produced while in the program's infancy. The costs to start new programs—particularly those that require specialized equipment like machining, engine repair, welding, and nursing simulators—can be prohibitively expensive. New programs that require significant modifications to facilities to accommodate things like air handling and high voltage electrical systems combined with the hiring of new faculty or the additional training of existing faculty can quickly exceed \$500,000—before any state funds begin to kick in.

I asked campuses to let me know what types of programs they had in mind if the prohibitive costs of starting up a new program were not a factor. Campuses reported a variety of programs to include diesel technology, automation and controls, fire science, aircraft maintenance, electrical vehicle technology, radiology and surgery technology, a rural hospital emergency simulation project, space studies, artificial intelligence and quantum science, and an expansion of an existing cybersecurity program among their many responses.

I encourage you to read testimony submitted by North Dakota State College of Science President, Rod Flanigan, as he shares how these funds would permit NDSCS create programs requested of them in the



SE region of the state. He encourages the committee to discuss how proposed funds might be distributed among campuses—based on the workforce needs and priorities of the state.

The NDUS fully supports a “Do Pass” recommendation on HB1241 and will avail our staff to support and coordinate a Workforce Innovation Program on behalf of the State Board of Higher Education. I remain available to Committee members for questions and comments.