

January 26, 2023

Senate Workforce Committee

Chairman Wobbema and Committee Members.

I am Hamida Dakane house representative from Fargo.

I support Senate Bill 2151.

One of the biggest long-term challenges for North Dakota has been and will continue to be issues around workforce. At its core this bill supports the expansion of the North Dakota workforce while also creating a more dynamic, innovative, and entrepreneurial economy.

This bill will help to attract and retain immigrant entrepreneurs in the state, which would in turn lead to an increase in economic activity. Immigrant entrepreneurs often bring new ideas and diverse perspectives to the business community, which can lead to innovation and job creation. Additionally, immigrant-owned businesses can often serve as a bridge to other markets, helping to expand trade and investment opportunities for the state. Expanded trade relations in North Dakota means more demand for North Dakota products while also meeting the workforce needs of the state.

This bill will help to address skills shortages in certain industries in North Dakota. Immigrants often have specialized skills and expertise in areas such as technology, engineering, and healthcare, which are in high demand in the state. By providing loan assistance to immigrant entrepreneurs, the state will retain and attract these skilled workers, which would in turn lead to an increase in productivity and economic growth.

This bill helps fit a niche that isn't being filled in the market currently. The program has an end date that is just long enough to show the market the potential of this niche, and then traditional lenders and market forces can take over to provide the service at that point. As a result, this bill create more inclusive and diverse communities. Immigrants often face barriers to accessing traditional forms of financing, such as lack of credit history or difficulty in obtaining collateral. By providing loan assistance specifically to immigrant entrepreneurs, the state can help to level the playing field and ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to start and grow a business. This would not only help to create more opportunities for immigrant entrepreneurs, but also promote greater economic and social inclusion. Those benefits expand well beyond the immigrant communities, as the private sector sees this programs success, even before its end date, we will likely see similar private programs put in placed or strengthened for all North Dakotans.

Please join me in supporting Senate Bill 2151 to improve our economy, reduce our workforce challenges, and make North Dakota the place in the United States that is known for supporting entrepreneurs in build their companies.