



1/30/2025

Chairman Mike Nathe and Members of the House Appropriations Education and Environment Division

Subject: Support for House Bill 1221

Dear Chairman Nathe and Committee Members,

As President and Co-Founder of Fargo Jet Center, I strongly support HB 1221, which addresses North Dakota's critical shortage of aviation maintenance professionals. The lack of qualified maintenance technicians creates a growing challenge to meet demands for aviation businesses, impacting operations both locally and nationally.

Fargo Jet Center, based at Fargo's Hector International Airport, is a certified FAA repair station supporting general and commercial aviation. We provide aircraft maintenance and avionics services and specialize in modifying aircraft for special missions, making our services unique in our industry. Despite our efforts to recruit and train technicians, we continually face challenges in finding qualified candidates. To help bridge this gap, we have developed a robust internship program for mechanics. However, 100% of our current interns come from out-of-state schools, highlighting the urgent need for an in-state aviation maintenance training program.

Over the past decade, high schools across North Dakota have expanded aviation education programs, including those in West Fargo, Grand Forks, Minot, Williston, Bismarck, and Kindred, along with online courses available through ND Career & Technical Education. These programs have generated strong student interest in aviation careers, yet until now, there has been no in-state pathway for those wishing to pursue aviation maintenance.

The new Aviation Maintenance Program at NDSCS, set to launch in August 2025, will provide a crucial in-state option for students, allowing them to train and work within North Dakota. Supporting HB 1221 will provide essential resources for workforce education innovation, ensuring a steady pipeline of skilled aviation mechanics. This investment will strengthen North Dakota's aviation industry, boost economic growth, and support our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Sweeney", is positioned above the typed name.

Jim Sweeney
President and Co-Founder, Fargo Jet Center
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