

Testimony for HB 1221

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. For the record, my name is Doug Darling, and I serve as President of Lake Region State College. I am here today testifying in favor of HB 1221. One of the critical issues in North Dakota is workforce. As Community Colleges we try to respond quickly and effectively to meet the workforce needs in ND. One of the challenges we have is when a new business relocates to the region and needs trained technical employees. It takes us too long to secure the resources to start new technical training programs. If a new company comes in right after the legislative session ends, we'd have to wait literally 2 1/2 years to request funding to gear up the training program. That is too long for business to wait. Most career and technical education programs require expensive specialized equipment to do the training. It's not uncommon for it to cost between \$500,000 and \$2,000,000 to gear up training program for a career and technical education program. Equipment is just one piece of the puzzle. Curriculum also needs to be written and many times faculty need some professional development or some training themselves to be able to teach the new content. I can't speak for the other campuses, LRSC does not have the resources in our budget to start up a new program without assistance. We've done this many times in the past with grant funds, help from industry partners and with help from the legislature. We've also closed low enrollment programs and reallocated the resources for other programs, but this also takes time because we have to teach out the students that are currently in the program and then gear up the new program. HB 1221 would provide those startup resources needed for new training programs. Having them held at the university system and having the campuses apply for them as needed will ensure that they're used for meeting workforce needs.