



January 27, 2025

RE: Testimony in support of House Bill 1221 to Secure Funding for North Dakota's Aviation Maintenance Program

Chair Heinert and members of the House Appropriations Education and Environment Division,

I am writing on behalf of the North Dakota Aviation Association to express my strong support for House Bill 1221. This critical legislation will provide necessary funding for the establishment of the Aviation Maintenance Technician program at the North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS)—the first program of its kind in North Dakota in over 30 years. North Dakota's aviation industry is a vital component of our state's economy, supporting commercial, business, and general aviation operations. However, the aviation maintenance sector is facing a severe workforce shortage. Without immediate action, this shortfall will significantly impact North Dakota's ability to sustain and expand its aviation industry.

The Aviation Maintenance Technician program at NDSCS is a direct response to this urgent workforce need. While the program has secured an FAA Workforce Development Grant, full funding through HB 1221 is essential to ensure its success. This funding will allow NDSCS to develop state-of-the-art training facilities, including necessary modifications to a leased hangar at Hector International Airport in Fargo. Furthermore, it will help provide specialized equipment, faculty hiring, and industry partnerships to ensure the program meets FAA Part 147 standards.

The economic benefits of this investment cannot be overstated. With the North American aircraft fleet projected to grow by 20% over the next decade, North Dakota must prioritize local workforce development to remain competitive. This program will create high-paying career opportunities for students and transitioning military personnel, bolstering our aviation workforce and ensuring our industry partners have access to a skilled labor pool. Additionally, North Dakota currently lacks an aviation maintenance technician school, forcing students to seek training out of state, reducing our ability to retain homegrown talent.

The aviation and aerospace industries in North Dakota have voiced strong support for in-state training, and this program will serve as a bridge between the educational sector and industry needs. Through partnerships with initiatives such as SkillBridge, service members will have a clear pathway to transition into civilian aviation careers, further strengthening our workforce.

By fully funding HB 1221, North Dakota has the opportunity to invest in the future of its aviation industry and workforce. I respectfully urge you to support this legislation and ensure that NDSCS receives the resources needed to successfully launch and sustain this program.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tanner Overland

Chairman

North Dakota Aviation Association