



Testimony for the 69th Legislative Assembly – House Education and Environment Division
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Bill: HB1221

Position: In Support

Chairman Nathe and Members of the House Education and Environment Division,

My name is Andy Armacost, and I serve as the President of the University of North Dakota. I'm here today to speak in support of House Bill 1221, which provides an appropriation for the Workforce Education Innovation Fund.

We've had many conversations among the campus presidents about how to kickstart new initiatives in response to workforce needs in North Dakota. Doing so often requires significant funding to add infrastructure, materials, teaching aids, initial staffing, or other one-time expenses.

When we establish new programs and course offerings, the long-term expectation is they will pay for themselves by attracting students who have an interest in careers in those areas. It is incumbent upon us to create the business case for launching new programs.

The challenge is that many of the schools in our system may not have the financial buffer to fund the launch of such programs. This fund will help kickstart programs and allow us to respond quickly to the evolving needs of the workforce.

At UND, the examples are numerous, and we could put funding to immediate use in the areas such as:

- Enhancements to our career center, experiential learning, and internship programs
- Growth in interprofessional health programs and activities
- Creation of a simulated rural emergency hospital to support nursing and medical students
- Recruitment and Retention of American Indians into Nursing (RAIN) program enhancements
- Teacher recruitment and retention initiatives
- New bachelor's degree programs in space studies and audio and visual production
- A new cyber testbed for cybersecurity students
- Graduate programs in AI and quantum science
- Adoption of AI into courses across the entire UND curriculum

As I advocate for this bill, I do so with the smaller schools in mind. This funding will be truly game changing for their responsiveness to the workforce needs of the state. This initiative is one that will improve workforce training opportunities and idea-to-marketplace response times across the entire NDUS system.

Please, again, accept my strong support for this bill. Thank you.