



Southwest Area CTE Academy

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March 11th, 2025

Chairman Nathe, and Committee Members,

My name is Aaron Anderson, and I have the pleasure of serving as the Director of the Southwest Area Career and Technical Education Academy in Dickinson. My testimony is to express my sincere thanks for your investment in CTE and my strong support for SB2019. Also to highlight the transformative opportunities it is creating for students in Career and Technical Education (CTE) across North Dakota, particularly at SWCTE.

SWCTE is the first brick-and-mortar CTE center established in North Dakota in over 40 years. This milestone was made possible through the funding support provided to the Department of Career and Technical Education during the last legislative session. That investment allowed us to transform a former Haliburton campus into a state-of-the-art training facility, now spanning 40 acres across three buildings, and providing top-tier education and career training to students in Southwest North Dakota.

Thanks to this funding, students now have access to 14 program areas and over 74 class offerings in fields like healthcare, welding, diesel technology, hospitality, and skilled trades. Students are able to fast-track their way to college or a rewarding career in high-demand fields, earning industry-recognized credentials, dual credit and valuable experiences while still in high school.

One of the most important aspects of SWCTE is that it attracts and provides programming for **all** students no matter their background or academic prowess. Career and Technical Education is for every student. At SWCTE, we see firsthand how CTE programs allow students to find their place, build their confidence, and chart a path to a successful future. Through hands-on learning in our classrooms and labs, students discover new strengths, build practical skills, and gain the clarity and direction they need to graduate and succeed in their careers.

We are also proud of the partnerships we've developed with Dickinson State University to offer college-level diesel technology and welding programs on our campus, creating a seamless

transition from high school to college-level education. These partnerships complement our high school offerings and allow students to further their education in high-demand fields while earning college credits.

Currently, SWCTE serves over 1,100 students from seven different high schools across our region, including students from two private schools and homeschool students from four districts—all of whom can access these programs at no cost to themselves or their families. This opportunity wasn't available two years ago, but thanks to the expansion of CTE centers across the state driven by your support of SB2019, this reality is now possible for all students in Southwest North Dakota.

Additionally, SWCTE has become a catalyst for bridging education with industry. We've developed partnerships with more than 92 businesses, and our Work-based Learning Program continues to grow. In 2022 we only had 7% of our graduating seniors have a work-based learning experience. I'm pleased to share we are on track to have over 32% of our current seniors to completion this spring. This program provides students with valuable real-world experience and connects them directly with employers, ensuring that their education is not only relevant but tailored to the needs of our region's workforce.

The future looks even brighter for CTE in North Dakota. Director Sick has outlined priorities that will allow institutions like SWCTE to expand our reach and impact even further. New programs are already in the works, including mechatronics technician certificate I in partnership with Bismarck State College, the expansion of adult and community training with TrainND, and efforts to fill the gaps in our programming to meet the growing need for skilled workers in high-demand sectors.

It is critical we get the needed support on the Secondary Grants line on Page 1, Line 26. This number needs to exceed \$10 million if we are going to continue the positive impact CTE is having on ND. This is an investment in our students and our business community that will return for decades to come.

I strongly urge you to support SB2019 and continue investing in the future of our students and our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Aaron Anderson
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