



March 12, 2025

Chairman Nathe and Members of the House Appropriations – Education and Environment Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of SB 2019. This bill is critical to the continued development and expansion of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs across North Dakota.

In Cass County, serving over 27,000 - K-12 students, we can meet this demand, yet there are gaps in CTE programs for **agriculture, emergency medical services, heavy equipment operations, human services, and skilled trades**. Additionally, sectors like aviation mechanics, medical careers, biomedical, information technology, and advanced manufacturing continue to require expanded programming and updates to high-tech resources. In ND and Cass County, we have witnessed the impact of CTE programs with concentrator students graduating at a rate of 97.6% versus overall high school graduates at 82%. CTE has demonstrated this trend of success for decades.

I urge you to amend SB 2019 to prioritize and restore critical funding identified by the ND Department of Career and Technical Education to fill program gaps and expand CTE programs. These investments will expose students to careers and set the stage to grow our own, filling the forecasted 52,000 job openings in North Dakota between 2021 and 2031. Providing students with career exploration, skilled training, and work experience will provide them with the professional transferable skills needed to succeed in the workforce. The time to invest in the future is now!

DCTE Priorities for attention and support:

- **\$22 million for New Program Development** to expand offerings aligned with high-demand industries, benefiting students in rural and urban areas. The Senate Appropriations Committee made significant reductions to the Department of Career & Technical Education's request, which will hinder CTE funding and program expansion across the state. In Cass County, 25-26 registrations indicate expansion in the areas of Construction = 2, Agriculture = 1, Health Sciences = 1, Business/Marketing = 1, and Technology & Engineering = 1 which will require an estimated additional local investment of approximately \$450,000 in year one and approximately \$900,000 for the biennium.
- **\$1.5 million for Work-Based Learning Coordinators** to cultivate partnerships between education and business and serve as a bridge to connect the community to high school counselors and students.
- **Earmark funding for CTE Capital** to finalize unfinished programming in area career center projects to ensure all CTE programming envisioned is accessible for student choice and workforce development. In Cass County, funding priorities to complete the final CTE programming for **robotics, mechatronics, precision machining, welding, information technology pathways, and business management** at the Career Innovation Center will require \$6.1 million dollars. This investment will provide the foundation and space to share high-tech labs, equipment, students, and instructors, creating more efficiency and opportunities through a network of coordination and community partnerships.

As members of the 69th Legislative Assembly, thank you for championing CTE as an essential investment in North Dakota's future, making learning personal, relevant, and career-focused for our students and workforce of the future.

I respectfully ask for your **support of SB 2019, with requested amendments**, to strengthen a proven model of success.

Sincerely,

Dr. Denise Jonas, Director of Career & Technical Education