



**Testimony for the 69<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly – House Education Committee**

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**Bill: HB1265**

**Position: In Support**

Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Andy Armacost, and I serve as the President of the University of North Dakota. I am here to offer my strong support for Bill 1265 and a number of others put forth by Representative Christy related to state funding for advanced computational technology initiatives.

Representative Christy and I served together on a voluntary group of members from K-12, higher ed, industry, and state government agencies to create a plan for how the state of North Dakota should position itself to adopt these critical new technologies in education, government functions, and industry partnerships.

I also served as the co-chair of the North Dakota University System’s subcommittee on digitization and AI. This work pre-dated the state-wide effort. Each of our higher education leaders recognized the impact of AI on workforce preparation, educational delivery, and campus operations. We must make sure our graduates are prepared for the workforce in the face of the opportunities and challenges posed by AI. Our K12 schools and our colleges must be well-prepared to deliver that education to make sure our students are, themselves, well-prepared.

This bill provides an important infrastructure that will be vital to achieving these goals. Every industry and every student in the state has the potential to benefit from this investment. It will enable strong support from higher ed and state agencies to deliver technical expertise to the challenges faced by the state and our industry partners. It will serve as an attractor to new firms looking for a home state with a supportive technological environment, where they can take advantage of advanced computing and people with the expertise to help them succeed.

You will ask, “Why do we need this in a rural state?” First, our existing primary industries, agriculture, and energy, will become increasingly reliant on advanced technologies and AI. We must support them with both a workforce and a technology infrastructure that allows them to capitalize on these advanced technologies. Our small businesses in any industry do not have their own expertise or technology to pull this off, and this initiative will allow them to do so. New industries that we have not considered in the state of North Dakota will find our state to be supportive of their adoption of advanced technologies, and our investment in this technology will help attract them. Finally, the way we operate our state, our hospitals, both in metro areas and in rural locations, and our other industries will be able to do more with the limited number of professionals they have. Workforce shortages will be helped using technology, and this investment will allow that to happen.

Rural America has birthed incredible minds and startling inventions that have benefited the world. Our hard work and inventiveness are legendary. Investing in advanced computational technologies, including Artificial intelligence, will provide direct benefits to our state and our people. Better service, better healthcare, better education. This is the science of better, and it is a bet we should be willing to take. Thank you.