

GREATER NORTH DAKOTA CHAMBER
HB 1495
House Industry Business & Labor Committee
Chair Jonathan Warrey
Feb. 9, 2025

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, my name is Andrea Pfennig, Vice President of Government Affairs for the Greater North Dakota Chamber. GNDC is North Dakota's largest statewide business advocacy organization, with membership represented by small and large businesses, local chambers, and trade and industry associations across the state. We stand in **opposition** of House Bill 1495.

GNDC believes the Legislature should defend against regulations and policies that are detrimental to the advancement of North Dakota's economy by opposing regulatory and legislative changes and mandates that would increase business burdens and costs. HB 1495 will increase employer burdens and costs by mandating employee leave for employees that serve in the legislature, regardless of industry or business need.

While we understand the intent, this bill raises a number of issues.

- Small businesses could be significantly impacted. They may not be able to find temporary employees available to cover for the employees serving in the legislature.
- Rural employers may be more negatively impacted than urban employers as there is a smaller hiring pool.
- There is significant time and expense to hire, onboard, and train an employee to perform their job function independently. To have someone fill the position for only four months would be ineffective and add considerable cost to employers.
- Critical industries with 24/7 operations such as healthcare, oil and gas, and mining, often require employees with a highly specialized skill set. Finding a replacement for the time that the employee is serving in the legislature may be especially difficult.
- It is unclear how interim committee meetings would be treated under this bill. Would employers be required to grant leave for those meetings as well?

However, the most important consideration is that labor availability has been identified as the top business concern facing companies in North Dakota. In our 2024 ND Economics and Employer Survey of our membership, 70% of respondents indicated they were having trouble hiring employees. This bill would place additional hardship on employers that are already struggling to fill positions.

We are grateful for those who serve in the legislature and encourage employers to work with employees who are interested, but a mandate like this would put employers in an untenable position. GNDC urges a Do Not Pass recommendation on HB 1495.