



Central Cass Public Schools | Fargo Public Schools | Northern Cass School District | West Fargo Public Schools

January 12, 2025

Chairman Sorvaag and Members of the Senate Appropriations – Education and Environment Committee:

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

CTE plays a vital role in preparing our students for the workforce by providing career awareness, hands-on learning, and pathways to in-demand jobs. In ND and Cass County, we have witnessed the impact of these programs with concentrator students graduating at 97.6% versus 82%, yet challenges persist in providing access to all programs to meet the growing demands of industry and regional businesses.

In Cass County, serving over 27,000 K-12 students, we have the opportunity to meet this demand, yet there are gaps in CTE programs for agriculture, public service, human services, and skilled trades based dependent on the high school of attendance. Additionally, sectors like aviation, medical careers, biomedical, information technology, and advanced manufacturing continue to require expanded programming and high-tech resources.

To address these challenges, I urge you to amend SB 2019 to prioritize and restore critical funding identified by the ND Department of Career and Technical Education. These investments will directly address the forecasted 52,000 job openings in North Dakota between 2021 and 2031 by providing students with the career exploration, skilled training, and professional transferable skills needed to succeed in the workforce.

Priorities for support include:

- **\$22 million for New Program Development** to expand offerings aligned with high-demand industries, benefiting students in rural and urban areas, middle school to post-secondary.
- **\$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.
- **\$56 million for CTE Capital Projects** 1) to finalize unfinished programming in the 13 area career center projects to ensure all CTE programming is accessible for student choice and workforce development as envisioned, and 2) to expand the center model and access to other regions across the state. The project in Cass County will utilize additional funding to complete the Career Innovation Center and enhance programming offered in the areas of robotics, mechatronics, precision machining, welding, information technology pathways, business management, and career exploration spaces.

Furthermore, DCTE funding will support the cost to continue and staffing for growth. This will increase the ability to attract and retain high quality leaders and educators in a competitive market to support cutting-edge programs, student leadership, and ensure high-quality CTE in our schools. Projects such as the STEM Ecosystem, virtual career exploration, MarketPlace for Kids and TrainND expand innovative experiences from elementary to adults.

As a member of the 69th Legislative Assembly, I applaud North Dakota in championing CTE as an essential investment in our future, making learning personal, relevant, and career-focused for our students. I respectfully ask for your **“DO PASS” vote on SB 2019** to strengthen a proven model of success for the future of K-12 education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Denise Jonas'.

Dr. Denise Jonas, Director of Career & Technical Education