



THE CHAMBER
FARGO MOORHEAD WEST FARGO

Letter of Support – SB 2239

Thursday, January 30, 2025

Chairman Wobbema and members of the Senate Workforce Development Committee,

For the record, my name is Cale Dunwoody, and I have the distinct pleasure of serving as the Vice President of Public Policy for the Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce (FMWF Chamber). On behalf of our over 1,700 members, I respectfully offer testimony in support of the Senate Bill 2239.

At the FMWF Chamber, our mission is to protect and promote business, inspire individuals, cultivate communities, and influence action. Our members continue to express concerns centered around the availability of high-quality, skilled workers and a strong workforce pipeline. While the shortage gap across the United States is narrowing, North Dakota remains one of the most severe states when it comes to workforce challenges. The U.S. Chamber estimates that there are approximately only 30 available workers for every 100 open jobs in North Dakota, compared to the national comparison of 83 available workers for every 100 open jobs. This indicates more must be done to attract, retain, develop and match employees with in-demand jobs.

Apprenticeships continue to be an innovative option to fulfill our critical workforce needs while simultaneously training and educating new employees. In recent years, North Dakota has seen an increase in apprenticeships with a 28.4% increase from 2021 to 2024. High participation in apprenticeship programs creates a positive economic impact as earning occurs alongside learning – creating a pipeline of already skilled workers. Additionally, it is an effective workforce retention strategy, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, 92% of apprentices continue employment after completing a Registered Apprenticeship, earning an average starting salary of \$72,000. Those who complete apprenticeship programs receive higher wages over their lifetime, earning approximately \$6,595 more annually than non-apprentice employees in the same field and with similar backgrounds. Employers also gain from these programs, seeing a typical return on investment of 44.3%.

Offering grants to eligible individuals participating in apprenticeships bolsters our ability to develop a talented workforce pipeline – ultimately, addressing critical workforce shortages throughout the state and building a more robust economy. As this committee considers this bill, we respectfully urge this committee to give this bill a **DO PASS** recommendation to further enhance apprenticeship opportunities and workforce development throughout our state.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and your commitment to North Dakota.

Sincerely,

Cale Dunwoody
Vice President of Public Policy
Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce