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S.B. 2239

SUPPORT

Senate Workforce Development Committee

Sen. Mike Wobbema, Chairman
Sen. Michelle Axtman, Vice Chair

Testimony of Zachary Greenberg

Interim Commissioner of Labor
N.D. Department of Labor and Human Rights

January 30, 2025

Chair Wobbema and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 2239. I am Zachary Greenberg, interim Commissioner of the North Dakota Department of Labor and Human Rights. I appreciate the committee's work in advancing policies that strengthen workforce development in North Dakota.

Before we dive in, I think it's important to note that HB 1036 creates a division of apprenticeship and SB 2239 establishes an apprenticeship grant program under the Department of Labor and Human Rights. I haven't yet had the opportunity to testify on HB 1036, but when I do, I will be testifying in support of the bill but also its relocation to Job Service North Dakota. In short, I recommend that the Apprenticeship Office be housed within Job Service North Dakota due to its strong alignment with workforce development initiatives, employer engagement, and federal apprenticeship support.

Importance of Alignment Between Scholarship and Apprenticeship Office

If the legislature moves forward with both SB 2239 and HB 1036, it is crucial to ensure alignment between the location of the scholarship program and the Apprenticeship Office.

If the state moves forward with this structure, it would be logical and beneficial for the apprenticeship grant program established in SB 2239 to be administered in coordination with the Apprenticeship Office.

Why This Alignment Matters

1. Consistency in Program Administration: Placing the grant program within the same agency overseeing apprenticeship development will create a seamless process for apprentices, employers, and administrators.
2. Maximizing Employer Engagement: Job Service North Dakota has well-established relationships with employers, allowing for better coordination in both program funding and employer participation.
3. Efficiency in Resource Allocation: Combining the administration of apprenticeship-related initiatives in one agency ensures effective use of state resources, reducing redundancy and improving outcomes for workers.

4. Enhanced Accessibility for Apprentices: Having a single point of contact for apprenticeship programs and financial assistance simplifies the process for individuals seeking to enter these career pathways.

To achieve these benefits, I recommend that the committee consider ensuring that SB 2239 and HB 1036 remain aligned in both intent and execution. This alignment will allow North Dakota to fully realize the potential of these apprenticeship initiatives and deliver the best possible support to our workforce.

Conclusion

Chairman Wobbema and members of the committee, SB 2239 is a critical step in strengthening our apprenticeship pipeline, and I urge its passage with consideration of the broader alignment of our apprenticeship infrastructure.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions.