

January 31, 2025

Speaker Frank Matus, Director UAS Integration, Thales USA, Inc. & Chair of the North Dakota UAS Council

Reference: Testimony in Support for Senate Bill 2256 – Research and Technology Park Fund

Testimony:

Mr. Chairman and esteemed members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB2256. I am testifying in SUPPORT of this legislation for the ongoing appropriation to support the research technology park fund.

The great State of North Dakota is blessed to have several innovative activities surrounding autonomous systems advancements, whether it be for agriculture, energy or specific to the UAS sector. We are dually blessed to have strong government and industry partners driving innovation within our state. Our higher-education system, particularly the University of North Dakota, which administratively houses the Northern Plains UAS Test Site and the Vantis Program, and North Dakota State University, home to advanced robotics and artificial intelligence applied research, are two differentiating forces increasing our reach as industry and leadership in diversifying the State's economy. I am writing in support of the establishment of a research technology park fund to continue to advance critical innovation across this emerging technology sector.

The Research Technology Park at NDSU is one of remaining components to round out the North Dakota autonomous systems ecosystem. Today, we lack a specific entity and location where technologies in the fields of autonomous mobile equipment, robotics, and artificial intelligence coming from the university systems meet partners and investors in private industry and/or the DoD sector. These technologies are pivotal to the continued growth of North Dakota's agricultural sector, as well as its expanding defense and technology industries. The bill directs funding towards product solutions that will not only advance these industries but also create a center to fast-track those solutions into the market.

This bill is a critical step towards ensuring that North Dakota remains at the forefront of technological innovation, driving economic growth and job creation for years to come. I urge you to support the passage of this legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards,

Frank Matus

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Fargo, ND