

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION OF NORTH DAKOTA



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Testimony of Keith Lund**Economic Development Association of North Dakota****July 20, 2010**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Keith Lund and I am here today on behalf of the Economic Development Association of North Dakota (EDND) to address this committee's draft legislative outline. I am the Vice President of the Grand Forks Region Economic Development Corporation and am here today in my capacity as a member of the board of directors of EDND.

EDND is the voice of the state's economic development community. We provide leadership for the economic development community on legislative issues and support professional development programs for its 80 members, which include development organizations, communities, businesses and state agencies. Our mission is to increase economic opportunities for residents of our state by supporting primary sector growth, professionalism among economic development practitioners and cooperation among development organizations.

The EDND Board of Directors is in the final stages of developing the association's legislative agenda for the upcoming session. Our process for developing the agenda includes input from all EDND members. While support for the committee's draft legislative outline will ultimately be determined by our membership, many of the components of your legislative outline were strongly supported in our 2009 agenda. Other components represent areas that EDND has a long history of supporting. I will address these areas in my comments this morning.

EDND's 2009 legislative agenda strongly supported the Centers of Excellence program, recognizing its impact on technology-led economic development. EDND also supported the development of infrastructure and capacity to support on-going research focused on commercialization as well as increased support for education and research expertise in target industries associated with existing and future Centers. I can also report that during EDND's fall conference in November, the topic of Centers of Excellence was discussed during a session on legislative priorities. During that session strong support was provided by many of EDND's members, from both small and large communities throughout the state.

During the 2009 session, EDND supported the creation of a post-secondary tuition waiver program based on student achievement, both as a means to encourage student achievement in science, technology, engineering and math disciplines and as a workforce recruitment mechanism. On behalf of

EDND I would like to thank chairman Grindberg and the committee for their important work on this legislation during the last session and your current efforts to institutionalize the program by creating a Student Scholarship Tuition Trust Fund.

EDND has a long history of supporting entrepreneurship and innovation. The organization's 2009 legislative agenda strongly supported the expansion of capital and infrastructure to support entrepreneurship throughout the state. Included in the committee's 2011 Preliminary Agenda is the Innovation 2020 program, which provides technical assistance grants to certified entrepreneurship centers. EDND's last agenda specifically supported technical assistance grants to assist entrepreneurship centers.

EDND has supported the expansion of new angel capital formation tools throughout the state. The creation of refundable tax credits to increase out-of-state investment in North Dakota new and growing businesses and the ability of the North Dakota Development Fund to provide matching grants to start-up technology-based companies who have secured angel investment are creative tools that will bring new investment into the state to help fuel our economy and advance technology across North Dakota.

EDND has long recognized the importance of workforce training to ensure North Dakota companies have access to the right type of talent for growth. The workforce initiatives identified in the committee's preliminary agenda like TrainND, Workforce 2020 and Operation Intern are the types of tools we need to keep in place to continue to support the workforce needs of North Dakota industry.

EDND is please to see the committee may consider automation tax credit legislation during the upcoming session. EDND strongly supported the proposal during the last session. The program would encourage North Dakota companies to invest in productivity that would allow them to maintain or enhance their competitiveness in the global market place.

Based on the long-standing principles endorsed by EDND and the priorities of the association during the most recent legislative sessions, it is reasonable to assume that EDND will support a majority if not all of the committee's proposed legislation. EDND looks forward to working with the committee and Chairman Grindberg in communicating the details of the proposed legislation to our members.

I want to commend the members of the committee for their hard work on the draft legislation and thank you for the opportunity to participate in your meeting today. I would be happy to answer any questions.