



**Testimony of Jennifer Greuel
Economic Development Association of North Dakota
In Support of HB 1505
Nov. 8, 2021**

Chair Delzer and members of the House Appropriations Committee:

I am Jennifer Greuel, executive director of the Economic Development Association of North Dakota (EDND). I am writing today in support of using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) aid to fund statewide career academies.

EDND represents more than 80 state economic development organizations and related businesses on the front line of economic development efforts throughout North Dakota. The primary purpose of the organization is to promote the creation of new wealth throughout North Dakota to develop more vibrant communities and improve quality of life.

North Dakota's unemployment rate has quickly rebounded after the pandemic (3.5 percent in Sept. 2021), and workforce availability is a significant challenge facing North Dakota businesses, limiting the growth potential of the state's economy. EDND supports the development of workforce attraction, development and retention strategies that address the needs of the state's businesses and industries.

The included \$80 million investment in the skillset of people in North Dakota is an investment in the state's future economy and programs which target youth and encourage students to consider in-demand, technical degree career paths to which they might not otherwise be exposed. The availability of a high-quality competitive workforce will continue to be a significant challenge facing North Dakota businesses, but this funding is one strategy the state can deploy to help combat this issue and support the economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for these important proposals and for your continued commitment to keeping North Dakota globally competitive and diversifying the state's economy.