



**Testimony of Jennifer Greuel, Executive Director
Economic Development Association of North Dakota
In Support of SB 2040
January 28, 2021**

Chair Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee:

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.

One of EDND's top five 2021 legislative priorities is to strengthen the infrastructure investment in our state. We believe SB 2040 is one of several bills being introduced this session with the potential to address this vital need.

The growth of our state over the last decade, combined with aging infrastructure, has led to a critical need to complete road, water, electric, airport, and other essential projects. Local communities need funds and affordable financing, which is difficult to achieve without raising taxes. From EDND's perspective, updated infrastructure improves quality of life and helps address housing needs. It also provides support to North Dakota businesses already providing jobs and revenue to the state, as well as new businesses able help diversify the economy.

We support the inclusion of Career and Technical Education centers in this bill. Workforce is still an issue in many communities and an investment in the skillset of people in North Dakota is an investment in the state's future economy. CTE has the capability to train and equip displaced workers to enter integral positions in the state and collaborating with schools encourages students to consider in-demand, technical degree career paths to which they might not otherwise be exposed.

EDND also supports the inclusion of funding for HIF, as affordable housing is another component to attracting workforce. For every dollar of HIF funding provided by the state has leveraged an additional \$5.11. As the program has evolved, more private and federal funding is being leveraged and HIF has been used as an important gap financing tool to keep a project moving forward.

Local developers understand the importance of infrastructure facilities to meet the needs of both homeowners and business. At the same time, we do not want to overburden our taxpayers. This bill allows affordable financing for continued growth of our communities.

Thank you for your continued commitment to keeping North Dakota globally competitive.