



January 27, 2021

Senate Education Committee

SB 2272

Katie Ralston, Director of Workforce Division, ND Department of Commerce

Good morning, Chairman Schaible and members of the Senate Education Committee. My name is Katie Ralston, and I have served as the director of the workforce division at the North Dakota Department of Commerce since January 2020. In my role, I also have the great pleasure of serving as the director of the industry-led Workforce Development Council. One of the Council's responsibilities is to review and update the state's in-demand jobs list on an annual basis in collaboration with Job Service ND. This list is referenced in SB 2272 as criteria by which academic programs and jobs qualify for the North Dakota Career Builders scholarship and loan repayment programs, so I'm here to provide some information on how this list is created.

Our goal is to create a list that is broad enough to capture diverse industries that appeal to North Dakota workers and students, but narrow enough to make a measurable impact on our workforce. Using the state's Labor Market Information to gather data, we aim to use a consistent and objective ranking approach in creating the list, in order to maintain transparency and to more accurately depict North Dakota's greatest workforce opportunities.

Some of the criteria we use are the number of annual job openings, in addition to job growth projections and how quickly the job is growing. We also look at annual wage and how competitive it is with surrounding states. Additionally, we work with industry and labor representatives, chamber of commerce and economic development professionals from across the state to help us understand emerging occupations in their regions and those that provide essential services, especially in rural areas.

The students and graduates who have been served by the North Dakota Career Builders program have reinforced that there is interest by young North Dakotans to pursue opportunities that help address our state's greatest workforce needs.

Career Builders is a tremendous investment in North Dakota's talent and an incredible resource for students, graduates, and employers who are utilizing it as a valuable recruitment tool for their companies. Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to speak today. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.