



January 23, 2023

Members of the North Dakota House Education Committee

RE: **Opposition for HB1163** - Relating to the administration of the ND Center for Distance Education.

Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Denise Jonas, Director of Career and Technical Education for the Cass County Career and Technical Education Center (C3TEC). I am reaching out in opposition to HB1163, relating to optional career and technical education high school curriculum and amendments to NDCC relating to minimum high school graduation.

During the 2021 session, legislative bills were developed for a personalized, proficiency-based graduation pathways, which exists in the format under the Department of Public Instruction Innovation Waiver. This and subsequent legislation allow a local board to create an approved learning continuum that would provide flexibility in meeting graduation requirements through innovative curriculums and experiences, in and outside of the classroom. I believe HB1163 bill is unwarranted, as opportunities currently exist in NDCC for local leaders and school boards to define optional graduation criteria.

Most importantly, I am concerned with the perception the identified optional curriculum indicators convey about career and technical education (CTE) as a pathway for rigorous learning. For decades, CTE has been viewed as learning space for those who can't versus an experiential learning environment for innovation and advanced learning. My concerns and opposition to HB1163 relate to the minimum GPA (at 1.66, which feeds into the misperception that CTE is only for students that struggle in school). GPA is not a component of the existing high school diploma requirements, so I would not find merit in this metric required for an optional diploma.

Additionally, post-secondary institutions are trending toward optional ACT requirements, so question why this metric would be added to an optional diploma. It also concerns me as to whether a student under this diploma could meet the entrance requirements for all North Dakota higher education institutions. If a high school aviation graduate cannot transition to a post-secondary program, such as UND Aerospace, we have not set our learner up for success. CTE is grounded in skill-demonstration and competency-based learning, thus I do not believe a student's ability to graduate high school should be contingent upon a single exam.

Finally, I do appreciate the emphasis on work-based experiences, yet there will be access limitations for students to complete the required work-based learning component due to geographical location, CTE programing, and industry partners. I remain opposed to HB1163 as written, but would find merit in further study to explore other state models and optional components that would positively impact learners.

Sincerely,

Dr. Denise Jonas, CTE Director