



March 13, 2023

Members of the North Dakota  
SENATE APPROPRIATIONS HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION

RE: Support for HB 1019 – Career and Technical Education

Chairman Dever and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB 1019. Your vote is critical to ensure adequate funding for the Department of Career and Technical Education (DCTE) to: 1) sustain funding for current career education and guidance programs, 2) support new and growing CTE programs, 3) expand access to CTE programs and shared high-tech labs at area career centers, and 4) adequately launch work-based learning as a direct pipeline to workforce development.

During the 2021 session, DCTE budget cuts have resulted in insufficient levels to sustain reimbursement rates and provide CTE funding for growing schools or new and expanding CTE programs. New high schools, like West Fargo Horace High School, along with many other new and expanded CTE programs across the state, are currently unfunded. Despite K-12 efforts, districts are challenged to meet CTE demands, let alone workforce demands. I would ask that funding requests proposed in HB 1019 be restored to the levels recommended by Executive Director Wayde Sick to ensure CTE's success in the next biennium.

In Cass County, we are pleased to offer a variety of career and technical education programs and pathways in our K-12 systems, yet a study in 2018 revealed program gaps in agriculture education, public service, human services, and the trades. In our region, there is also growing demands in medical careers, construction, information technology, transportation, graphic communication, and manufacturing. Although we continue to cultivate partnerships and innovate delivery, we are limited based on CTE funding. I ask for your support through HB 1019 to expand new programming for growing communities.

Finally, I ask for your leadership, your voice, and your advocacy to amend HB 1019 to restore the one-time ask of \$40 million for the 13 North Dakota area career center projects. The one-time funding request is critical to guarantee area career center projects are built with each community's vision and workforce needs in mind, and not gutted due to construction costs. The two-year delay in federal grant dollars has amplified construction costs by approximately 30-40%, in addition to inflation impact. Construction costs continue to escalate, with total estimates now at \$56M. This one-time investment will ensure area career centers are designed adequately and CTE programs are delivered through high-tech labs when they open their doors. This funding will also accelerate center openings beginning fall 2023 through fall 2024. Details related to the Career Innovation Center in Cass County are available in the corresponding brochure.

Career and technical education is, and will remain, a vital component of the K-14 educational system. CTE provides career awareness and work experiences that motivate students to stay in school, graduate, and make informed career decisions. With almost 18,000 job openings in North Dakota, skilled labor shortages, and a thriving innovative ecosystem, CTE is one strategy to make a difference in our future workforce.

As a member of the 68th Legislative Assembly, you will have the opportunity to support CTE as an investment in our state's economy and as a legacy for North Dakota. I respectfully ask for your "DO PASS" vote on HB 1019, with the additional funding amendments, to adequately fund CTE and North Dakota's emerging area career centers.

Sincerely,

Dr. Denise Jonas, Director of Career & Technical Education