

## **Support for RWIP Funding & SB2018 – Strengthening Workforce & Tourism in North Dakota**

Chairman Nathe and Members of the House Education and Environment Committee,

My name is Suzie Kenner, and I am the Executive Director for the Devils Lake Chamber of Commerce and the Devils Lake Tourism Division. I am reaching out today to emphasize the critical importance of restoring \$10 million in funding for the Regional Workforce Impact Program (RWIP) and to express strong support for SB2018, which provides essential tourism marketing dollars and funding for the Find the Good Life Campaign. Additionally, I urge the legislature to fully restore the Destination Development grant program to \$25 million and increase ongoing marketing dollars for North Dakota tourism to \$10 million to ensure long-term growth and sustainability for our communities. In smaller communities around North Dakota, like Devils Lake, we wear many hats, and I would like to tell you today just what the Department of Commerce efforts, programs and grant initiatives do for the community of Devils Lake.

### **RWIP Impact on Devils Lake**

Thanks to previous RWIP funding, the Devils Lake Chamber of Commerce and our partners have been able to:

- **Recruit & Retain Workforce Talent**
  - Developed and distributed a new portal on our website to attract new residents.
  - Hosted job fairs and recruitment events that directly connected local businesses with local students to retain them after high-school or college graduation.
  - Implemented new hire support and community integration efforts to improve long-term retention.
- **Support Local Employers**
  - Created business resources and training programs to help local employers strengthen their workforce.
  - Addressed specific labor shortages in key industries, including healthcare, education, and tourism.
  - Strengthened career development initiatives in partnership with local stakeholders.
- **Enhance Digital Resources for Workforce Attraction**
  - Upgraded our website to provide direct one-on-one communication with potential new residents.
  - Expanded online resources to offer detailed relocation information, including housing, job opportunities, and community integration.

### **SB2018 & the Importance of Tourism & Workforce Attraction**

The Find the Good Life Campaign and statewide tourism marketing efforts have been key drivers of workforce recruitment and economic growth in our region. However, without proper funding, we risk losing the momentum that has been built.

# devils lake

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To ensure continued success, we urge the legislature to:

- **Restore the Destination Development Grant Program to \$25 million** to continue supporting infrastructure and tourism development projects across the state.
- **Increase tourism marketing dollars to \$10 million** to keep North Dakota competitive in attracting visitors and future residents.
- **Make tourism marketing funding an ongoing appropriation rather than one-time funding**, ensuring stability and long-term planning for economic growth.

## **We Ask You to Restore RWIP, Support SB2018 & Strengthen Tourism Investments**

With workforce shortages persisting across North Dakota, it is essential that RWIP funding is restored to \$10 million to allow communities like Devils Lake to address labor challenges effectively. Likewise, increased and ongoing investment in tourism and workforce attraction through SB2018 is necessary to sustain the momentum we have built.

We urge you to advocate for:

- **Full RWIP funding restoration to \$10 million**
- **\$25 million in Destination Development grants**
- **\$10 million in ongoing tourism marketing funds**

These investments are not just beneficial; they are critical to the long-term success of Devils Lake and North Dakota as a whole.

Thank you for your time and leadership on these important issues. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these efforts further and share specific success stories from our region. Please don't hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Suzie Kenner  
Executive Director  
Devils Lake Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism