

TESTIMONY FROM JAMESTOWN REGIONAL ENTREPRENEUR CENTER IN SUPPORT OF
INNOVATE ND PROGRAM WITH ND DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Date: March 13, 2025

RE: SB2018 Commerce Appropriations Bill

Written Testimony by: Katherine Roth, Executive Director, Jamestown Regional Entrepreneur Center,
Jamestown, North Dakota

Dear Chairman and committee members,

My name is Katherine Roth. I serve as the Executive Director of the Jamestown Regional Entrepreneur center in Jamestown, North Dakota.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding Commerce Appropriations Bill SB 2018.

The Jamestown Regional Entrepreneur Center was started in order to support the creation and sustainability of small businesses across the nine counties of Barnes, Dickey, Foster, Griggs, LaMoure, Logan, McIntosh, Stutsman, and Wells. The JREC provides customized training and personalized technical small business assistance all focused on empowering community members to successfully launch and grow their businesses.

As the Executive Director of the Jamestown Regional Entrepreneur Center, I provide resources to support North Dakotans of all ages to commercialize their ideas. As well, students and faculty from regional universities, such as the University of Jamestown and Valley City State University, are provided with access to entrepreneurial business coaching and training to support the commercialization of their ideas. Our entrepreneur center's partnership with the North Dakota Department of Commerce strengthens our opportunities to serve small businesses in the south central region of North Dakota. The Innovate ND program, LIFT Fund, and BioND serve as catalysts to support new venture creation, growth, and sustainability in North Dakota.

The current version of SB2018 provides approximately \$1.5 million of funding for entrepreneurial grants and vouchers through the Innovate ND program. Restoring the funding level to the originally requested budget of \$2 million will assist with expanding the program to increase the number of successful graduates. Innovate ND is a timely and relevant program, which aids innovative entrepreneurs in our state to focus on creating new opportunities in North Dakota. The Innovate ND program also provides grants to entrepreneurial centers that provide coaching and technical assistance to innovators. The Jamestown Regional Entrepreneur Center is one of four that works closely with North Dakota's entrepreneurs. Staff from each center have extensive experience guiding entrepreneurs through the startup, development, and expansion of the new entrepreneurial ventures.

North Dakota entrepreneurs, such as Adam Zach, founder of Zegacy, have successfully graduated from the Innovate ND program having received extensive coaching, mentoring, and guidance. As he continues to pursue resources from within North Dakota's entrepreneurial ecosystem, his progression is well grounded by having had the entrepreneurial training experience within the Innovate ND program through the North Dakota Department of Commerce.

I encourage the committee members to support the originally submitted budgetary request for the Commerce Appropriations Bill SB 2018. It is a privilege to support the innovative entrepreneurs in North Dakota. Thank you for your time and review of this written testimony today.

Sincerely,

Katherine Roth