

**Jonathan Melgaard**

915 2nd Ave. S #4

Fargo, ND 58103

Jonathan@hand-off.events

(218) 849-5374

Thursday, March 13, 2025

**Representative Mark Nathe**

Chairman, House Appropriations – Education and Environment Division

North Dakota Legislative Assembly

Dear Representative Nathe,

I am writing to express my strong support for the Department of Commerce Appropriations bill, SB 2018, which funds critical economic development programs in North Dakota. As the Founder & CEO of Hand-Off, an event collaboration platform designed to streamline communication for large-scale event organizers, I have directly benefited from the Innovate ND Program administered through CTB/NDWBC. This program has been instrumental in helping me develop and scale my business.

Beyond financial assistance, the mentors and advisors in the program provided invaluable support and encouragement, connecting me with resources and key contacts across the state. Their guidance helped me navigate the challenges of early-stage growth and gave me the confidence to push forward. The networking opportunities facilitated through Innovate ND have been instrumental in opening doors to partnerships, potential customers, and additional funding opportunities.

Additionally, the strategic funding provided by Innovate ND allowed us to accelerate testing and development of new features, ensuring we could gather real customer feedback early and refine our product to meet industry needs. This jumpstart was crucial in helping Hand-Off establish credibility in a competitive event technology market.

Without this support, launching and scaling Hand-Off would have been significantly more challenging. Programs like Innovate ND not only empower individual businesses but also drive statewide economic development by fostering innovation, job creation, and industry growth.

I urge you to support Innovate ND in SB 2018 to ensure businesses like mine continue to have access to the resources necessary for success. Thank you for your time and consideration. If you would like to discuss my experience further, I would be happy to connect.

Best regards,

Jonathan Melgaard

Founder & CEO, Hand-Off

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