



## Letter of Support – Senate Bill 2018

Monday, March 17, 2025

Chairman Nathe and Members of the House Appropriations Committee – Education and Environment Division,

For the record, my name is Cale Dunwoody, and I serve as Vice President of Public Policy for the Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce (FMWF Chamber). On behalf of our more than 1,700 members, I respectfully offer testimony in support of Senate Bill 2018 and urge the committee to include funding for the Base Engagement Grant Program.

The North Dakota National Guard is an invaluable asset to our region, state, and nation. Our local units are nationally recognized for their excellence and are always ready to answer the call of duty. Their dedication is evident through their global missions and ability to respond to local and national needs, such as combating floods in the Red River Valley, flying F-16s over our nation's capital, supporting the fight against COVID-19, and assisting at the southern border.

The mission of the Fargo-based North Dakota Air National Guard's 119th Wing is to provide trained and ready Airmen executing world-class MQ-9 precision attack and reconnaissance, as well as target intelligence production and expeditionary support capabilities. The 119th Operations Group leads in training and combat hours flown on the MQ-9 platform, a remotely piloted aircraft used for combat and intelligence collection missions. The 119th Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Group (ISRG) provides kinetic and non-kinetic targeting support to Combatant Command Air Operations Centers. Additionally, the 119th Wing is one of only four regional training sites in the entire Air National Guard, offering training in civil engineering, heavy equipment operation, and Rapid Airfield Damage Recovery (RADR).

These regional military units continue to execute critical national security missions while making a significant impact on our communities. North Dakota must work together to ensure the vitality of these military bases. Funding for the Base Engagement Grant Program, alongside private investments, supports local Guard units by enhancing advocacy, raising awareness, advancing recruitment efforts, and fostering community-based programs. For example, these funds can be used to recruit military personnel. Currently, the 119th Wing's end-strength is 94%, with a goal of reaching 105%. Achieving this goal is vital for the Wing to perform its mission effectively. This recruitment support, along with other strategic initiatives, will help protect our military units from potential Base Realignment and Closures, modernize equipment, boost recruitment, and provide essential community support.

In 2023, the North Dakota National Guard had an economic impact of over \$342 million statewide, with more than \$123 million coming from the Fargo and West Fargo region. While the economic impact is significant, the value of these units extends far beyond economics. The men and women of the National Guard are integral to the vitality of our communities. They serve as first responders, educators, doctors, tradespeople, and business owners. These individuals and their families are deeply embedded in the fabric of our community and are essential to the growth and prosperity of our region.

The communities of Minot, Grand Forks, and Fargo respectfully request funding for the Base Retention Grant Program to support critical military activities statewide and demonstrate our commitment to strengthening local military units. As the committee considers Senate Bill 2018, we urge the inclusion of this vital funding for these communities to continue enhancing North Dakota's military excellence and bolster the competitive advantage of our military units in the next biennium.



Sincerely,

Cale Dunwoody  
Vice President of Public Policy  
Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce