

# SOUTHEAST REGION

## Career & Technology Center

### Central Office/Billing

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March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025

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

Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I appreciate the time and commitment you dedicate to ensuring the needs of North Dakota are met. One of the most pressing challenges facing our state is addressing workforce shortages, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) plays a critical role in strengthening North Dakota's workforce pipeline.

CTE's mission is to equip students with career awareness, hands-on learning experiences, connections to post-secondary education, opportunities to obtain industry-recognized credentials, and access to work-based learning experiences in collaboration with business and industry. CTE has been — and will continue to be — an essential component of our educational system, preparing students to be *Choice Ready* and *Life Ready*. I firmly believe that CTE remains one of our state's most powerful tools in engaging, retaining, and preparing North Dakota's youth to fill the high-demand workforce needs that exist today and in the future.

As the Director of the Southeast Region Career & Technology Center (SRCTC), I am submitting written testimony in support of SB2019. Your continued support of this funding request is critical to the long-term sustainability and growth of Career and Technical Education across the state. The appropriation outlined in SB2019 will provide essential funding for maintaining existing programs, supporting workforce training, and funding new and expanding CTE programs.

Over the past two years, we have witnessed significant growth in the number of new CTE Centers across the state — a direct result of the Legislature's previous investment in area career and technology centers. This investment has allowed for the expansion of CTE opportunities, ensuring that students across North Dakota, including rural communities, have access to high-quality career and technical education. However, I am increasingly concerned that the current funding level approved by the Senate does not reflect the financial needs necessary to get these new centers operational and fully staffed. The initial request from the State CTE office was for \$20 million to support new and expanding programs; however, the Senate amended that appropriation down to \$3 million. This reduction in funding significantly limits our ability to help these newly approved CTE Centers become fully operational. Without adequate funding from the State CTE Board, several new centers will struggle to open their doors or maintain consistent staffing.

As an example, our CTE Center in Wahpeton is celebrating its 52nd year of service, providing hands-on career education to over 1,700 students in southeast North Dakota annually. Our center operates in collaboration with 15 member school districts, offering high-quality career and technical training in fields such as Agriculture Education, Automotive Technology, Career Development and Counseling Services, Chef Training, Construction Technology, Diesel Technology, Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Training, Marketing, Medical Science and Health Careers, Patient Care Technician, and Welding Technology. Our work has provided a direct pipeline of skilled, workforce-ready students to North Dakota's industries, helping to fill critical employment gaps.

It is important to note that the cost of delivering CTE programming is significantly higher than that of traditional educational offerings due to the need for specialized instructors, high-cost training equipment, industry-standard certifications, and work-based learning partnerships. Additionally, the ongoing operational costs associated with launching and sustaining new CTE programs place a substantial financial burden on centers like ours. Without appropriate funding support through the New and Expanding Programs line item, we risk limiting access to CTE and failing to capitalize on the momentum created by the recent expansion of CTE centers across the state.

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Through Cooperation and Technology*



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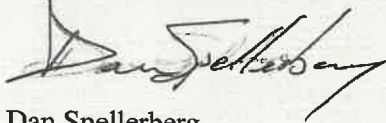
In 2021, the North Dakota Legislature demonstrated bold leadership by investing in the development of new CTE Centers across the state. This decision has already yielded positive results by increasing student access to CTE and addressing workforce shortages in key industries. However, the value of that investment will not be fully realized without the necessary operational funding to ensure those new centers are adequately staffed, resourced, and fully functional. The State CTE office originally requested \$20 million in the New and Expanding line item to ensure these centers could open and operate effectively. Unfortunately, the current Senate-approved a version of SB2019 that reduces the funding to \$3 million, which will leave many centers unable to fulfill their intended purpose. I urge you to fully fund the New and Expanding Programs line item to allow these centers to serve North Dakota students and employers effectively.

Investing in CTE is a direct investment in North Dakota's workforce and future economic stability. With over 18,000 job openings across the state, now is not the time to slow down the momentum that has been created through the expansion of CTE centers. The continuation of sustainable funding through SB2019 will help ensure that CTE remains a driving force in workforce development and talent retention across North Dakota.

As a member of the 69th Legislative Assembly, you have the opportunity to strengthen North Dakota's future workforce by fully supporting SB2019, specifically by restoring the \$20 million request for the New and Expanding line item. This funding is critical to ensuring that newly approved CTE Centers have the financial support needed to open their doors, hire high-quality instructors, and serve students across the state.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and ongoing commitment to investing in Career and Technical Education. I am happy to answer any questions or provide further clarification regarding the importance of this funding request. I respectfully urge your support of SB2019 and a restoration of funds to the New and Expanding line item to ensure that CTE continues to meet North Dakota's workforce needs both now and in the future.

Respectfully Submitted,



Dan Spellerberg  
CTE Director  
Southeast Region Career & Technology Center



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