



March 12, 2025

House Appropriations Committee
North Dakota State Legislature

Re: Senate Bill No. 2019

Honorable Committee Members,

I am writing to encourage your support of the Department of Career and Technical Education budget, particularly the funding directed toward science, technology, engineering, and mathematics initiatives. This funding directly supports the North Dakota STEM Ecosystem.

As the president of the North Dakota STEM Ecosystem, I can attest to the positive impact that state funding has made on students' access to STEM experiences across the state. The North Dakota STEM Ecosystem seeks to facilitate high-quality learning experiences in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics related fields for students across North Dakota.

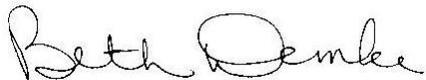
Biennium funding has allowed ND STEM to provide grants that encourage education entities and business/industry partners to participate in STEM activities/projects for K-12 students within each of the four designated regions in the state (Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest) providing greater opportunities for rural and tribal communities. Grant awards in the current biennium will provide STEM experiences for approximately 7,000 students in over 125 school districts.

We are requesting additional funding for the 2025-2027 biennium to support the hiring of staff to ensure that all students in our state have access to STEM experiences. Since the inception of North Dakota's STEM Ecosystem in 2010, the organization has been managed by individuals who volunteer outside of their professional roles. The addition of ND STEM staff will create new opportunities for regional and statewide STEM events and will provide greater accessibility to ND STEM grants. Over the course of the biennium, ND STEM staff will seek grants and donations from a variety of stakeholders to match and eventually replace the additional state support being requested at this time.

The focus of ND STEM staff will be to develop and facilitate collaborative partnerships among five sectors – PreK-12 Education, Informal Education, Higher Education, Public Sector, and Industry, ensuring that our students are prepared for a STEM-focused workforce. Keeping the learner at the center, ND STEM staff will work to establish critical partnerships to identify and fill statewide STEM learning and workforce development needs. ND STEM staff will leverage our involvement in the STEM Learning Ecosystems Community of Practice, further connecting us to national resources. These connections are important as they can lead to opportunities for North Dakota students, such as our recent Artificial Intelligence Education Summit in New Town.

I appreciate the opportunity to share how the North Dakota STEM Ecosystem can better serve the students in our state and further magnify the state's investment in STEM. Your support for our additional funding request would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beth Demke". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Beth Demke, ND Lobbyist 2024-2025 #1081
President of the ND STEM Board of Directors
Chief Executive Officer, North Dakota's Gateway to Science