

Testimony of Laura Lacher

North Dakota Ethanol Producers Association

In Support of SB 2019

March 21, 2025

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

My name is Laura Lacher, executive director of the North Dakota Ethanol Producers Association (NDEPA). NDEPA represents North Dakota’s ethanol plants, industry stakeholders and associated businesses. On behalf of our member plants, I want to share our support for SB 2019 and the continued investment in CareerViewXR and highlight the value it can bring to industries like ours.

The ethanol industry is evolving rapidly. With opportunities emerging in carbon capture, sustainable aviation fuel, and other low-carbon technologies, we’re entering a new era of innovation. These advancements will create a growing need for a skilled workforce—right here in North Dakota.

The North Dakota Ethanol Council (NDEC) is currently in discussions to partner with CareerViewXR to help highlight the future of agriculture and renewable energy in our state. The platform already includes virtual tours of an ethanol plant, offering students an inside look at the innovation, technology, and real-world impact of careers in the industry. Expanding access to these immersive experiences can inspire early interest in high-demand fields—especially in rural communities where most of our plants are located where exposure to those career paths may be limited.

We hope the committee will consider restoring the program’s original funding level to help realize its full statewide potential and strengthen these important industry-education connections. Continued support for CareerViewXR not only helps students see what’s possible—it also helps industries like ours build the workforce we’ll need for the future. We appreciate the commitment to this initiative and are encouraged by the growing collaboration between education and industry.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions.