



Letter of Support – S.B. 2239

Tuesday, March 18th, 2025

Chairman Warrey and members of the House Industry, Business, and Labor Committee,

For the record, my name is Cale Dunwoody, Vice President of Public Policy for the Fargo-Moorhead-West Fargo Chamber of Commerce (FMWF Chamber). On behalf of our 1,700 members, I respectfully offer testimony in support of Senate Bill 2239, which aims to establish an apprenticeship grant program.

At the FMWF Chamber, our mission is to protect and promote business, inspire individuals, cultivate communities, and influence action. Our members continue to express concerns about the availability of high-quality, skilled workers and a strong workforce pipeline. While the workforce shortage across the United States is narrowing, North Dakota remains one of the states most affected by workforce challenges. The U.S. Chamber estimates that there are approximately only 30 available workers for every 100 open jobs in North Dakota, compared to the national rate of 83 available workers for every 100 open jobs. This suggests that more must be done to attract, retain, develop, and match employees with in-demand jobs.

Apprenticeships continue to be an innovative option for addressing our critical workforce needs while simultaneously training and educating new employees. In recent years, North Dakota has seen a 28.4% increase in apprenticeships from 2021 to 2024. High participation in apprenticeship programs creates a positive economic impact, as earnings occur alongside learning, creating a pipeline of already skilled workers. Additionally, it is an effective workforce retention strategy. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, 92% of apprentices continue employment after completing a Registered Apprenticeship, earning an average starting salary of \$72,000. Those who complete apprenticeship programs earn higher wages over their lifetime, making approximately \$6,595 more annually than non-apprentice employees in the same field with similar backgrounds. Employers also benefit from these programs, seeing a typical return on investment of 44.3%.

Offering grants to eligible individuals participating in apprenticeships bolsters our ability to develop a talented workforce pipeline, ultimately addressing critical workforce shortages throughout the state and building a more robust economy. As this committee considers this bill, we respectfully urge it to give the bill a **DO PASS** recommendation to further enhance apprenticeship opportunities and workforce development throughout our state.

Thank you for your attention and commitment to North Dakota business community.

Sincerely,

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