

Dear Chairman Wobbema and members of the Senate Workforce Development Committee,

My name is Lisa Montplaisir I write to you on behalf of the NDSU Faculty Senate of which I serve as the President.

Faculty have raised serious concerns about HB1220 and we encourage a **do not pass** recommendation.

We recognize the efforts of Representative Motschenbacher and colleagues sponsoring the bill and share the workforce concerns facing North Dakota and seek to find ways to work with the legislature to fill those needs. However, this bill will not alleviate needs in high-demand occupations. In fact, if this bill is passed, it will exacerbate the problems in NDUS institutions and workforce. We agree with so much of the testimony provided thus far on the need for general education in all degrees. Rather than repeat those concerns, we provide an alternate lens. We share a few examples of the problems below.

Concerning 1a. *“Offer a North Dakota accelerated degree as an optional substitute for any degree offered by the institution which prepares a student for a high-demand occupation;”*

What is an accelerated degree? Is it time compressed acceleration such that a student is taking dual credit courses in HS and finishes their remain credits on a campus? Is it taking max loads every semester, including summer do be done in an accelerate time? Or is it reduced credits? These all fit the definition of an accelerate degree.

What is a high-demand occupation? Is it from the US Department of Labor¹ which identifies healthcare, software, and cooks/fast-food as the top three? Or the Bureau of Labor Statistics² which identify wind-turbine technicians, solar installers, and nurses as the top three? Or is it from jobsnd³ that creates categories where every major on our campus would fit? This list would identify all institution graduates to be identified in 1b. *“Determine annually which degrees offered by the institution prepare students for a high-demand occupation;”*

While it may be possible to meet 1c. and *“provide a list of North Dakota accelerated degrees to the appropriate occupational and professional boards;”* that list is not a direct link to a job. In most cases, the occupational and professional boards have governing bodies that set the criteria and standards for licensing, not the institution of the degree nor the hiring body. The criteria from governing bodies explicitly identify the need for general education courses, prohibit the removal of general education credits in reduced credit degrees, and identify skills most often acquired in the general education courses as minimum standards for application or licensure. Each of these nullify 1d. *“Not require a student to obtain general education credits for a North Dakota accelerated degree.”*

Further, section 2 seems to demand the granting of a license by an occupational or professional board in ND. *“Upon review of an individual's application for a license to practice in a profession designated as a high-demand occupation by an institution under the control of the state board of higher education, an occupational or professional board shall approve a North Dakota accelerated degree and recognize the degree as an accredited program for licensing purposes.”* That is simply not how professional licensing occurs. All institutions of NDUS are accredited by the Higher Learning Commission which defines the criteria at the institutional level. HLC has criteria for reduced credit degrees and each institution is already working with the State Board of Higher Education on the process for establishing those pathways. In addition, many professions (Nursing, Pharmacy, Engineering) have their own professional

licensing criteria established by the professionals of the discipline and recognize inter-state agreements for those licenses. This bill would likely remove NDUS from inter-state hiring agreements.

Again, we recommend a **do not pass** on HB 1220 as it is written or in any other form. As identified above, the institutions and the accrediting bodies are already working to address the needs in ways that will allow the students and institutions to maintain licensure options.

Lisa Montplaisir, PhD

Faculty Senate President, 2024-2025

1. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/wb/data/high-demand-occupations#:~:text=Home%20health%20and%20personal%20care,60.0%25%2D79.9%25>
2. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/fastest-growing.htm>
3. <https://www.jobsnd.com/sites/www/files/documents/jsnd-documents/In%20demand%20occupations%20list%2007.01.2023-PY24.pdf>