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Testimony of Kyle Martin
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In Support of SB 2018
March 3, 2020

Chairman Monson and members of the House Appropriations Education and Environment Committee:

My name is Kyle Martin, executive director of the Technology Council of North Dakota (TechND). I am writing to voice support of SB 2018.

TechND, formerly known as the Information Technology Council of North Dakota (ITCND), was created in 2000 by North Dakota business, government and education leaders who recognized the need to strengthen the state's information technology infrastructure and reposition the state as a national leader in IT. The organization has since expanded its focus to include members from the technology industry as a whole. TechND has over 60 member organizations, with representatives from both the public and private sector.

The Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) program within the Department of Commerce is important to advancing TechND's mission of encouraging the use, growth and development of technology in North Dakota.

North Dakota stands at the threshold of opportunity through the advancement of its beyond visual line of site network (BVLOS) and is leading the nation in supporting the agricultural, retail, defense, and energy industries through the utilization of UAS. The BVLOS network serves as a critical sandbox for the aerospace industry by allowing companies to test the feasibility of long-distance unmanned flight operations. And, with BVLOS site deployment in

McKenzie County, the opportunities afforded by the network far extend beyond the Grand Forks region.

The BVOLS and long-range drone activities currently being tested in North Dakota could open the door to future drone delivery of medical supplies to rural communities, provide easy access to nutrition by delivering food, allow ranchers to monitor their herds from miles away, allow power companies to quickly inspect power infrastructure after a winter storm, or keep our nation's skies safe from threats imposed by hostile nations.

The Technical Skills Training Grant Program, also supported in SB 2018, provides \$1 million in grant support funding for workforce training programs. These programs seek to assist displaced workers wishing to acquire the technical skills necessary to make a career change and remain employed in North Dakota. As workers pursue new careers, the technology sector is an attractive option, providing employees with flexibility, job growth and good wages. The Technical Skills Training Grant Program has the potential to bridge the gap between high demand computer science and technology positions and North Dakota's workforce.

TechND thanks you for your support of SB 2018. Both the UAS Program and Technical Skills Training Grant Program are important to supporting North Dakota's workforce and have the potential to create new jobs and create economic opportunities for our region. TechND hopes you will support these initiatives within SB 2018 to the fullest extent possible.