



To: House Appropriations Committee
From: Shannon Full, President/CEO, FMWF Chamber of Commerce
Date: February 1, 2021
RE: **Support HB 1431**

Chair Delzer, members of the House Appropriations committee,

For the record my name is Shannon Full and I serve as the President and CEO of the Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce. I'm here today to offer testimony in **support of House Bill 1431**, which includes critical funding for multiple projects. On behalf of our over 2,000 Chamber member businesses, I urge your support for this critical bonding package. This bill is an opportunity to have significant wide-spread impact for the entire state and now is the time to take advantage of this opportunity.

Though this legislation has numerous important elements, today I am going to focus on three, the **Cass County Career Workforce Academy, FM Diversion Project and the Ag Productions Development Center on NDSU's campus**. All three of these projects should be viewed as critical investments to the state.

Since moving to the Fargo area this fall, I have had conversations with over 75 executives, of which all but two identified workforce issues as their number one concern hindering the future success of their businesses. We need to invest in workforce solutions on a statewide level. We need to have a statewide approach to talent attraction, retention and development. I'm glad to see this bill includes funding for this purpose across the state.

Career Workforce Academies have already proven to be successful with a significant success story being the academy here in Bismarck. For Cass County in particular, the **Career Workforce Academy** will help alleviate long-term workforce shortage in our region, which is critical for our communities to continue to grow. The academy will provide all Cass County K-



14 students, incumbent workforce and new immigrants a curriculum to prepare them for successful careers. Our private business leaders as well as public community leaders recognize the need and importance of this asset, and as such have stepped up with a large investment of \$21 million to make this project possible through a public/private partnership. This significant amount already raised comes from private companies, Cass County, City of Fargo, City of West Fargo, The Chamber and EDC through Fueling Our Future and the U.S. Department of Commerce. All of these entities have already been tapped for support and have contributed to the project.

The \$9 million of state funds included in this bill will fully complete this project and ensure we can get the facility up and running to train our future and immediate workforce as soon as possible. We continue to see high demand for workforce and with Amazon moving to the region, and the future diversion construction requiring increased workforce, our region could be in danger of disastrous workforce shortage issues creating wide spread impacts if we don't invest in workforce solutions while expanding and growing our region and the state. I respectfully ask for your strong support of Career Workforce Academy funding by supporting this bonding bill.

Another critical project in this legislation, of which you are all very aware, is the **FM Area Diversion Project**. With all litigation and permitting issues behind us, I want to focus on how we can build this project as efficiently as possible, and I would encourage you to do the same. This legislation will actually reduce the cost of the project by \$20 million through eliminating short-term borrowing costs. In addition, having money up front ensures the project can stay on schedule and be free from costly deferrals. Time is of the essence as we face factors that are out of our control with Mother Nature. The Greater Fargo regional economy is more than \$18 billion annually, which is just short of one-third of the state's \$55 billion economy. A major flood would all but destroy that economic impact, not just during the flood but for years to come, as we have unfortunately experienced in other regions. The state budget would be significantly impacted for decades to come if we don't address this need. We must protect the



businesses and residents of this state, and the FM diversion will protect a significant economic region in the state.

I want to sincerely thank you all for the hard work you have done to make funding for the diversion possible. I understand this project requires significant investment. Please keep in mind that the economic stability that this project will bring to our region will allow for further growth and prosperity boosting the overall state economy. I ask for your support in securing the remaining necessary funds for this project as outlined in HB 1431.

Lastly, I'd like to touch on the importance of the **Ag Productions Development Center on NDSU's campus**, which will house the current activities of Harris Hall, the Meats Lab and Northern Crops Institute. NDSU conducts internationally recognized research and unfortunately the current spaces within Harris Hall and the Meats Lab are currently proven to be less than adequate spaces for both research and teaching activities. I won't spend time going over the numerous deficiencies that exist as I understand you have that information, rather I want to focus on the importance of completing the new center.

The new facility will ensure high-quality research through innovation and advanced teaching activities will be continued. Not only does NDSU's agriculture related research have state-wide impacts, but globally too. It is imperative that we invest in the infrastructure needed to provide support for NDSU's robust reaching and research activities. As such, I ask for your support in funding the Ag Productions Development Center on NDSU's campus, as reflected in HB 1431.

I ask for your **support of HB 1431** and urge you to take advantage of the outlined opportunities. Workforce solutions, economic stability through permanent flood protection and adequate infrastructure for research are all critical contributors to our state's overall economic prosperity. This bonding package is about more than just building a career academy, completing the FM area diversion and a new agriculture center, but about how the effects of these



investments will have long-term benefits for the entire state of North Dakota. I welcome any questions at this time or later. You will see my complete contact information included with my submitted testimony.

Thank you,
Shannon Full

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