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Testimony of Kyle Martin
Executive Director
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In Support of SB 2272
February 15, 2021

Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Kyle Martin, executive director of the Technology Council of North Dakota (TechND). TechND wishes to voice support for SB 2272.

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.

North Dakota's technology industry is strong and growing. North Dakota's technology subsector has increased by more than 17 percent over the last decade and projects more than 7,500 new and replacement technology positions will be needed in North Dakota over the next decade. As of December 2020, Job Service indicated a total of 479 job openings in North Dakota's technology sector.

The Career Builders program has the potential to serve as a valuable part of North Dakota's workforce recruitment toolkit and can help fill the technology sector's employment demand. By offering scholarship and loan repayment incentives, we can encourage students to pursue degrees and certificates in computer sciences. However, the Career Builders Program needs additional funding to market and promote the program. Changes in this bill would provide the North Dakota University System with funding for marketing efforts. Historically, the program has relied on grassroots efforts and word of mouth advertising to promote the program and its benefits.

It is also no secret the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our workforce. Displaced workers are seeking new forms of employment and many entry level technology positions require only a certificate. TechND supports the changes in this bill that would allow graduates from certificate programs approved by the Department of Career and Technical Education's board to be eligible for Career Builders scholarships or loan repayment. TechND also welcomes recent changes to this bill that would allow out of state graduates to be eligible for the Career Builders loan repayment program. This change would provide an incentive for tech workers to relocate to North Dakota to pursue technology careers and serve as a recruitment tool for technology firms.

TechND recognizes the value of the Career Builders Program, its potential and asks you to support SB 2272.