



**Senate Appropriations Committee - SB 2272**

**Senator Ray Holmberg, Chair**

**February 15, 2021**

Chairman Holmberg, Members of the Committee:

My name is Brian Ritter and I am President of the Bismarck Mandan Chamber EDC. Please accept the following testimony in support of SB 2272 on behalf of our organization's approximately 1,200 members.

Whether it's during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic or not, the single greatest issue facing Bismarck-Mandan's economy is workforce. To illustrate that point, please consider the fact that in January 2021, there were 2,417 open jobs in Burleigh and Morton Counties combined according to Job Service North Dakota. For reference, in January 2020 there were 2,604 and in January 2019 there were 1,936.

To address that issue locally, in the short-term, we are actively engaged in talent attraction efforts targeting Bismarck-Mandan expatriates and others in selected geographies across the United States. In the long-term, we have implemented workforce development programming such as Job Shadow Week and E2: Educators Experience targeting different parts of our community.

The continuation of the State's skilled workforce student loan repayment program and skilled workforce scholarship program, the Career Builders Program, is just one more tool we will have to address the issue. The Program has already been utilized successfully by Bismarck State

College (BSC) and its continuation will continue to have positive impacts on both our community and our students.

And we're more than happy to do our part to ensure the Program's continued success. During the last biennium, the Chamber EDC included articles and information regarding the Program in both our print and electronic publications and even hosted an informational session with our membership in hopes of promoting their participation. Again, we'll continue to do so going forward assuming the Program continues.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of SB 2272 and would respectfully ask for a 'Do Pass' recommendation.