



**SB2272**

Senate Education Committee

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Chair Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, my name is Brenda Zastoupil, and I serve as the Financial Aid Director of the North Dakota University System (NDUS). I am here to provide testimony in support of SB2272. The skilled workforce scholarship and loan repayment programs, known as “ND Career Builders” was established by the 2019 Legislative Assembly as a workforce development tool to attract and retain talent into high need occupations in the state. It has been a collaborative effort among partners across the state, including higher education, the Bank of ND, business, economic development and the Greater ND Chamber.

The program structure was developed following approval in April 2019. The Workforce Development Council and Job Service ND developed the high need and emerging occupations list in July 2019, educational programs were mapped to the occupations, procedures implemented, and applications developed by August 2019. A grass-roots awareness campaign from NDUS and partners then began in fall 2019 to inform all public, private and tribal colleges of the program, as well as high school counselors, businesses and ND Job Service. Business and students began to commit to the state program and initial awards was issued in October 2019. The program has continued to grow since then. COVID-19 did have an impact wherein we saw a drop-off of inquiries from March to May 2020.

The engrossed bill contains key amendments that improve access, eligibility and streamline processes, and secures the funding in Section 5. The NDUS is supportive of the amendments. Current statistics for the program are attached.

This concludes my testimony in support of SB2272, and I will stand for questions from the committee.

Attachment-ND Career Builder Statistic