

Chairman Schaible, Members of the Senate Education Committee –

Good morning, my name is Eric Ripley and I serve as the Director of CTE for the Grand Forks Public Schools and Grand Forks Area Career and Technology Center. I am providing my support of the modified HB1430 which through your support, will fix a major flaw that has existed within the ND Academic and CTE Scholarship program since its inception.

The overarching goal of K-12 is to enable our students to be “Choice Ready” for their next step after high school , and for the vast majority of career pathways, that next step involves post-secondary education. I have worked in K-12 education for my entire 22 year career, both as an instructor and administrator. What has changed over that time is the understanding that post-secondary education or college does not automatically equate to a 4-year or advanced degree. The archaic approach to selecting the college first, then selecting a degree path that institution offers, then hoping to find an occupation that matches that level of degree has thankfully evolved to students finding the occupational pathway that interest them, then determining the degree or training required for that pathway, and then selecting a post-secondary location that provides that degree or training.

My CTE staff and I strongly believe that our CTE courses at the K-12 level are designed for a student to explore and start developing a career pathway that aligns with their individual interests and abilities. Often times, that pathway aligns with a 2-year or less degree at one of the state’s high quality technical colleges. Currently, for students that qualify for either the North Dakota Academic or CTE scholarship, the scholarship maximum amount of \$6,000 is provided one semester at a time (\$750), repeatable up to 8 semesters (a typical 4-year degree program). For the CTE student interested in pursuing an Associate Arts or Technical Degree, both of which are less than 4 years, that student ends up leaving scholarship dollars on the table and unused.

The flaw in the current scholarship program is that the payments of \$750 per semester over the course of 4 years still encourages the perspective that all student should be pursuing a 4-year degree. With the successful passing and implementation of HB1430, this flaw can be remedied to provide all of our scholarship qualifying students with the same \$6,000 level of promised state support.

It should be noted that the qualifications for both categories of the scholarships are not affected by HB1430, and the overall amount of the scholarship being awarded is still capped at \$6,000. So HB1430 is not seeking to increase the number of high school seniors qualifying for the scholarship, nor increasing the total amount of dollars to be awarded to each qualifying student, but rather allowing those students that do qualify to fully use the dollars within the scholarship amount.

As an education system, and as a state, we have made great strides over the past 10 years in helping students to make an educated, next step in their plans after high school. However, the current scholarship distribution still places a higher value on selecting at least 4 years of post-secondary education. HB1430 is a good bill to support all of our scholarship qualifying students the same, and takes an important step in showing the state’s support for student’s choosing to pursue a technical degree program.

Chairman Schaible and Education Committee members, I ask for your support of HB1430 and stand for any questions you may have. Thank you.