

**Senate Finance and Tax**  
**HB1431**

**March 17, 2021**

Chair Bell and members of the committee, my name is Wayde Sick, State Director of the Department of Career and Technical Education. I am submitting testimony in support for HB1431, but ask that it is amended to include intent that was within the original version of the bill.

As introduced, Section 11 of HB1431 would provide funds to the Department of Career and Technical Education to award grants for the purpose to expand Career and Technical Education, specifically for buildings and equipment. Section 11 of HB1431 included \$92.5 million for this purpose but was removed prior to crossover. Currently the state of North Dakota has ten area career and technology centers, providing Career and Technical Education in a variety of ways, either face to face or virtually via online or the state Interactive Television or ITV system. Five of the centers are considered brick and mortar centers as most of the method of delivery is face-to face. Five are virtual, meaning they lack a central physical space. They provide their coursework either online or through ITV, but all provide some face-to-face instruction as well. Eight of our area career and technology centers provide some level of virtual career and technical education, either via online or interactive television (ITV). Students that take face to face CTE courses through a center are either bussed into the center, attend satellite sites or have traveling teachers. The point of that clarification, or possibly confusion, is to illustrate one size does not fit all when it comes to the needs of the region.

The ten centers serve approximately one hundred school districts and provided instruction to around 6000 students in the 2019-20 school year. I have included a current map of the ten area career and technology centers and the school districts they serve.

Although our centers do an excellent job, there are gaps within our state, not just in access to a CTE center, but also the programming our existing centers are able to provide. Every student in the state does have access to Career and Technical Education as state statute does require schools to offer CTE. Our comprehensive high schools do a phenomenal job offering CTE, either by providing it themselves or utilizing an area career and technology center. The benefit though of a center is a center can scale programs that many of the state's schools are unable to. A prime example is a health careers program, offered by the Roughrider Area Career and Technology Center out of Hebron. A few health careers teachers can serve all twelve of the member schools. This is just one example the partnership of a center and the efficiency it can provide. Area Career and Technical Education Centers are not to replace the CTE programs that is offered in our high schools, but to supplement.

I am here to state the Department of Career and Technical Education is here to partner with the Legislative Assembly to continue to expand access to more CTE programs, through the development and expansion of centers and the programs offered through our high schools. Additional centers, strategically placed in various parts of the state, can supplement what member high schools are offering in CTE, bring in workforce training and post-secondary offerings and potentially serve populations with barriers to employment, such as English Language Learners, Adult Education, etc.

Future CTE Centers could become a one stop shop for K12 education, Post-Secondary programs, and workforce training.

The original version of HB1431 set aside funds for specific communities and a portion that was a competitive grant. I believe a better route would be to have a competitive process for all the funds, awarding communities and their partners with grants that require local matching funds, to establish centers. This selection process would be based on availability of matching funds, labor market interest alignment, student interest, school district buy in and innovative practices and delivery. A selection committee would need to be established, consisting of representatives of various entities, such as NDCTE, NDDPI, Department of Commerce, the Workforce Development Council and others, to ensure expertise in the areas of K12 education, post-secondary education and workforce was represented.

This concludes my testimony and I am here to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.