



To: Senate Finance and Taxation Committee
From: Katie Mastel, Government Affairs Manager, FMWF Chamber of Commerce
Date: March 17, 2021
RE: **Support HB 1431**

Chair Bell, members of the Senate Finance and Taxation committee,

For the record my name is Katie Mastel and I serve as the Government Affairs and Advocacy Manager of the Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in regards to House Bill 1431, the bonding bill. On behalf of our over 2,000 Chamber member businesses, we **support House Bill 1431**, as it includes critical funding for multiple projects. This bill is an opportunity to have significant wide-spread impact for the entire state, and now is the time to take advantage of this opportunity.

We are particularly grateful for the inclusion of the **FM Diversion Project funding** in this bill. As litigation and permitting issues are now behind us, we need to focus on how to build this project as efficiently as possible. This legislation accomplishes just that through reducing the cost of the project by \$20 million by eliminating short-term borrowing costs. I trust you are all aware of the importance of this project, mindful of the devastation that a major flood could have, both ruining livelihoods and the state's economy. I want to sincerely thank you for all the hard work you have done to make funding for this critical project possible, prioritizing the protection of livelihoods and the economic stability of our region.

In addition, we are supportive of the funding included for the **Ag Productions Development Center on NDSU's campus**. The current spaces used are less than adequate. The new facility will ensure high-quality research through innovation and advanced teaching activities will be continued. Not only does NDSU's agriculture related research have state-wide impacts, but globally too. It is imperative that we invest in the infrastructure needed to provide support for NDSU's robust reaching and research activities.

One funding restoration we would respectfully ask for the Senate to consider, is grant dollars for Career Workforce Academies across the state. Workforce continues to be a number one concern hindering the future success of many businesses statewide. We have to invest in workforce solutions on a statewide level, and the career academy model has already proven successful with a significant success story being the academy in Bismarck. These



academies help alleviate long-term workforce shortage, which is critical for continued growth of our communities and state.

In order to make the Cass County project possible, our public and private sectors have already stepped up with commitments amounting to \$21 million. Access to state grant dollars would greatly impact this project, as only \$9 million more is needed to fully complete this project and ensure we can get the facility up and running to train our future and immediate workforce as soon as possible. We respectfully ask for the Senate's strong consideration of restoring Career Workforce Academy funding in this legislation.

All three of the aforementioned projects should be viewed as critical investments to the state. As such, we ask for your **support of HB 1431** and urge you to take advantage of the outlined opportunities. Workforce solutions, economic stability through permanent flood protection and adequate infrastructure for research are all critical contributors to our state's overall economic prosperity. This bonding package is about more than just the potential to build a career academy, complete the FM area diversion or build a new agriculture center, but about how the effects of these investments will have long-term benefits for the entire state of North Dakota.

I welcome any questions you may have at any time – my contact information can be found below. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Katie Mastel
Government Affairs and Advocacy Manager
Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce
kmastel@fmwfchamber.com | 701.516.2114