



FMWF Chamber Support for SB 2094

January 27th, 2023

Chairman Sorvaag and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee - Education and Environment Division:

For the record, my name is Cale Dunwoody and I have the pleasure of serving as the Director of Public Policy for the Fargo Moorhead West Fargo (FMWF) Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber's mission is to be a catalyst for economic growth and prosperity for businesses, members, and the greater community. Today, on behalf of our over 1,900 members, I offer testimony in support of Senate Bill 2094.

As you know, workforce is a major challenge facing every employer across this great state and the North Dakota National Guard is not exempt from these challenges to attract and retain talented individuals. Our local National Guard units have seen firsthand the recruiting challenges that exist in the current employment market. These challenges are heightened given the current language that exists within Chapter 37 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to National Guard tuition grants. Under current law, North Dakota Guardsmen and Guardswomen cannot utilize state tuition assistance if enrolled in a post-secondary institution that is located outside of the state, including remote course options.

With the growing number of online or remote courses of study and our community's proximity to post-secondary institutions in Minnesota, this adjustment to state law would allow our National Guard recruiters to tap into new candidate pools that want to join the North Dakota National Guard but may be interested in attending a post-secondary institution in a neighboring community. For example, States like Minnesota allow for 100 percent undergraduate tuition reimbursement, up to the resident undergraduate rate at the University of Minnesota for 144 semester credits, for their guard members regardless of institution and location.

It is estimated that the ND National Guard loses between 25 and 54 recruits simply because they are considering a college out of state or online and would not receive tuition assistance should they decide to go there. Our state must continue to find creative solutions to compete for highly skilled workers and navigate the waters of this national workforce shortage. Senate Bill 2094 does exactly that by expanding opportunities for the men and women that serve our state and nation. On behalf of our members, I would like to thank committee members for their time this morning and would urge a DO PASS recommendation.

Respectfully,

Cale Dunwoody
Director of Public Policy
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