



December 14, 2022

Commissioner Dennis Olson

Minnesota Office of Higher Education

1450 Energy Park Drive, Suite 350

St. Paul, MN 55108

Commissioner Olson:

On behalf of the Alexandria Technical and Community College I would like to extend our appreciation and gratitude to have this opportunity to write this letter of support for the MN Dual Training Grant. As the number one ranked community college in Minnesota and the most comprehensive truck driver training course in the state, we feel the pursuit and overall increase of this grant is well timed and worth attention. All sectors of the transportation industry are in dire need of qualified and well-educated employees. This directly affects truck drivers, but additionally affects diesel technicians as the equipment we use is increasingly technologically advancing.

Alexandria College has ranked number one in the state and number three in the US for its Diesel Technician program. The Truck Driving program at Alexandria College is the longest running in the state, starting in 1973. We continue to run the most comprehensive course in the state and we continue to not only fill our classes every semester, but fill and have a multi-person waiting list to get in the program.

There has been a truck driver shortage for as many as thirty years, however, the pandemic of 2020 highlights just how dependent the nation is on the transportation industry. Currently and over the last several years transportation and specifically truck driving, has been the number one growing job sector in Minnesota.

New regulations have created a bottleneck in the pipeline for new drivers entering the industry. The newest regulation states all new Commercial Driver License holders must go to an accredited school. The regulation is welcome and needed, however, it also slowed down the capability of those entering the field by limiting entry-level access to only those who have attended school.

Currently we partner with several industry partners throughout Minnesota. On the truck driving side, I personally have near thirty close industry partners. The Diesel Tech program has the same. The industry

partners we pair with are well known in Minnesota as well as the country. Caterpillar Inc, Peterbilt, MN DOT, Brenny Transportation, Halvor Lines, and Lube Tech just to name a few.

These partnerships offer a lifeline to the Truck Driving and Diesel Tech programs in ways such as entry-level job openings, internships, donations, and sponsorship.

The Dual Training Grant would not only be beneficial to these partnerships, it would pair perfectly with the degrees offered to our students completing these programs.

As stated throughout this letter, transportation is a growing sector and is not going anywhere. As consumers, the general public has become accustomed to wanting goods, and seeing those goods delivered from almost anywhere in the world to their doorstep in a day or two. This, of course, is in large part due to the truck drivers and diesel techs making this happen on a daily basis. With this ever-increasing demand in mind, it is my suggestion that an increase be made to the MN Dual Training Grant to adequately serve the transportation industry.

Sincerely,

Jason Surface

Professional Truck Driving Program Director

Tom Weller

Professional Truck Driving Instructor

Dustin Shilling

Diesel Technician Instructor

Andy Grieve

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