



May 11, 2022

Senator Pratt
Senator Rarick
Senator Dahms
Senator Senjem
Senator Frentz

Representative Noor
Representative Ecklund
Representative Long
Representative Stephenson
Representative Swedzinski

Dear Members of the Conference Committee (SF4091):

The Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards (MAWB) is grateful for your work on the Omnibus Jobs, Energy, and Commerce bill. MAWB represents the cooperative efforts of the sixteen local workforce development areas in Minnesota who oversee investments of state and federal employment and training dollars across all 87 counties.

Statewide workforce development programming is imperative, given the worker shortage which was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Minnesota Workforce Boards work to ensure all Minnesotans have access to the programs and services they need to get connected to stable employment in high-demand fields. As such, MAWB fully supports the \$20 million to local workforce boards contained in the House Omnibus bill to address local workforce development challenges. This is much needed funding that will allow local boards and their providers to serve both jobseekers and employers, support our statewide network of CareerForce locations, and allow us to reach out to the unemployed and underemployed.

The desired outcome of this added funding is to increase capacity and fill programmatic gaps that are not otherwise supported by state funding. Consequently, we have a concern regarding the source of the funding, which is currently the Workforce Development Fund (WDF). When funding is taken from the WDF, it reduces funding to the State Dislocated Worker program, operated by local workforce development boards. This program is central to local board's ability to serve workers who have been laid off through no fault of their own and get them quickly reconnected to the labor force. Receipts into the WDF, less any Legislative appropriations made, are statutorily dedicated to this important work. Using General Fund dollars for this appropriation would ensure that local boards have this increased capacity to address persistent workforce challenges while also continuing to serve Dislocated Workers who were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Minnesota prides itself on having a top-notch workforce, yet some critical gaps exist. Although the reasons for these gaps are complex, it is clear that well-funded employment and training programs are necessary for ensuring that employers have the workers they need. Now, more than ever, the state needs strong workforce development boards, a robust statewide system, and a coordinated and responsive strategy. This funding is critical to boost the capacity of local programs to ensure the needs of all jobseekers and employers are met and we truly appreciate the House including it in its Omnibus bill.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Jeanna Fortney at jfortney@mncounties.org or 703-606-2442.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Scott T. Schulte". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "S" and "T".

Commissioner Scott Schulte, Chair
Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeanna M. Fortney". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "J" and "F".

Jeanna Fortney, Director
Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards