



May 2, 2023

Senator Champion  
Senator McEwen  
Senator Mohamed  
Senator Hauschild  
Senator Gustafson

Representative Hassan  
Representative Xiong  
Representative Nelson  
Representative Berg  
Representative Olson

Dear Members of the Conference Committee (SF3035/HF3028):

The Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards (MAWB) is grateful for your work on the Omnibus Jobs, Economic Development, Labor, and Industry bill. MAWB represents the cooperative efforts of the sixteen local workforce development boards 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 and existing racial inequities, which were only exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Minnesota's local 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 critical investment in workforce development programming in the omnibus bills. We would like to highlight the following programs:

- **Minnesota Youth Program (MYP):** MYP funds workforce programming for low-income and at-risk youth all over the state, operated by local workforce development boards. The program has excellent performance outcomes and is the one state-funded workforce program that serves youth in all 87 counties. Both bills contain comparable added funding which will help local boards meet the need we are seeing from youth in local communities.
- **Targeted Populations Workforce Program:** Local workforce development boards work with jobseekers and employers on several strategies to address disparities. We welcome the opportunity to expand this programming with potential funding through the Targeted Populations Workforce Program. We support the House version with a funding level of \$30M each year.
- **Drive for Five:** We support investment in career pathway style programming in Minnesota's in-demand sectors. We appreciate the intention of the program to establish innovative approaches to training, reskilling, or building pipelines of workers for those industries. We support the Senate version with a funding level of \$15M each year.
- **Digital Modernization:** The COVID-19 pandemic truly highlighted the need to have accessible, modern, and user-friendly technology to ensure services and communication are available to all. MAWB looks forward to working with DEED on further developing these ideas to ensure they meet statewide needs.
- **Office of New Americans:** Local workforce development boards work with new Americans throughout the state, and we support the creation of the office for coordinated activities and resources which assist this population.
- **Childcare Investments:** We recognize the lack of childcare, particularly in Greater Minnesota, as one of the main barriers to employment for many potential workers. As such, we fully support grants to communities to increase the number of quality childcare providers.

We appreciate your attention to the economic and workforce challenges detailed throughout this legislative session and your thoughtful solutions contained in these omnibus bills. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Jeanna Fortney at [jfortney@mncounties.org](mailto:jfortney@mncounties.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeanna M. Fortney".

Jeanna Fortney

Director, Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards