



Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services, Inc.

Workforce Development Board

March 15, 2023

Chair Jay Xiong
557 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Xiong and Members of the House Workforce Committee:

On behalf of the Central Minnesota Workforce Development Board, serving an 11-county area in Greater Minnesota, I am writing in support of HF2127, a bill that will add much needed funding to the Minnesota Youth Program (MYP). MYP is integral to serving young people in our area who face barriers to education and employment opportunities.

Increased funding for MYP programs helps to advance equity by providing innovative opportunities to the neediest youth. An example of innovative programming includes our Operation Exploration camps:

Youth from diverse communities are provided the opportunity to challenge themselves, gain knowledge, enhance skills, and strengthen communities through six innovative, two-week hands-on career exploration camps. This initiative targets youth with disabilities, youth of color, and/or homeless youth that are economically disadvantaged and/or at-risk.

Operation Exploration offers a unique opportunity for youth to learn about exciting, high-demand, well-paying careers in their area through hands-on career pathway projects, business presentations/business tours, development of career success skills, and classroom instruction. The focus is on in-demand career pathways such as healthcare, trades, automotive, manufacturing, agriculture, or other sectors in which labor market indicators show a need for skilled workers. During camp, participants are given the opportunity to explore industry sectors through hands-on learning. Participants receive coaching and guidance toward general career development. This opportunity truly gives youth the ability to “try on” careers while making decisions about their future! After the Operation Exploration camp, based on individual needs, youth participate in a work-based learning experience, service-learning project, and/or credentialed training.

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P.O. Box 720
Monticello, MN 55362
763.271.3700

www.cmjts.org

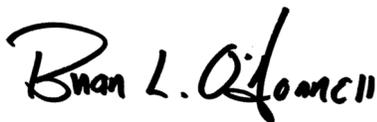
Increased funding would also allow us to invest in virtual reality technology that brings hands-on career exploration out of the metro and large city areas, and directly into the hands of our rural areas. At a yearly cost of \$20,000, headsets would be provided for each region to use with their youth. Additionally, we would also provide additional outreach to schools in the form of presentations, class sessions, work-based learning opportunities, employer connections, etc., and increase the amount of support services we are able to provide youth.

Lastly, increased funding would allow us to hire more talented staff to help serve those youth and guide them to self-sufficiency.

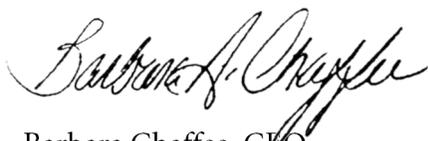
The Central Minnesota Workforce Development Board also supports increasing MYP's age of eligibility from 16-21 to 16-24. This mirrors other youth workforce development programs' age of eligibility and will allow greater flexibility for co-enrollment to leverage multiple funding streams.

We appreciate Representative Sencer-Mura's leadership on this bill and encourage the committee to support investment in youth programming via the Minnesota Youth Program.

Sincerely,



Brian O'Donnell, Chair
Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services, Inc. Workforce Development Board



Barbara Chaffee, CEO
Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services, Inc.