



April 3, 2022

Chair Noor
379 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Noor and Members of the House Workforce and Economic Growth Committee:

On behalf of the Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards (MAWB), which represents Minnesota's 16 local workforce development boards (LWDB), I am writing in support of HF4355, as amended, which provides funding for LWDBs to advance work they are undertaking to meet local jobseeker and employer needs. This is a pivotal time for the legislature to address Minnesota's workforce challenges, including worker shortages and racial disparities, through meaningful investment in workforce funding.

The \$20 million for local workforce development boards in HF4355 will support strategies identified in local Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act plans to address Minnesota's workforce shortages. The critical needs right now are in equipping all jobseekers for employment, supporting our CareerForce locations, conducting outreach and marketing, and assisting employers with their recruitment and retention strategies.

To properly support jobseekers with barriers to employment, LWDBs need additional and flexible funding to provide support services, connections to education and training, case management, and to strengthen our career pathways systems that make entrance to high-demand industries more accessible. On the employer side, we are seeing requests from businesses like never before. Most are hurting for skilled workers and need assistance with recruiting strategies and identifying untapped talent. With the population of Minnesota continuing to diversify, employers are asking for help to ensure their hiring practices and work environments are inclusive. Local boards are providing this assistance in several ways, and this added funding will support intensive work with employers.

LWDBs operate nearly 50 CareerForce centers across the state. Additional funding will ensure the centers are open and accessible for all who need them. Serving people in-person via our centers is important: data shows that people need people, and our intensive in-person connections with jobseekers lead to the success we have as a system. In Greater Minnesota where broadband is not fully available or affordable, our CareerForce locations are critical for jobseekers to search for jobs, write resumes, and get staff assistance on the computers when needed.

We appreciate the committee's leadership on these issues and encourage continued investment in Minnesota's workforce system at this critical time for our economy. As federal workforce funding has declined over time, state investment in this area is needed to address current workforce challenges.

Sincerely,

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

Jeanna Fortney
Director