Kunkel & Associates: Workforce Development & 260E Program Impact Statement

Executive Summary & Company Background

Founded in Iowa in 2007 following a corporate relocation from Wisconsin, **Kunkel & Associates** is a Dubuque-based Commercial Insurance and Risk Management Services brokerage. We deliver consultative solutions across transportation, property and casualty, and employee benefits.

Our initial decision to relocate to Dubuque was directly incentivized by the **Iowa New Jobs Training Program (INJTP / 260E)**. Over nearly two decades of organic growth, Kunkel & Associates has evolved into a premier employer in the region, recognized by the *Des Moines Register* as a **Top Iowa Workplace**. The flexibility of the 260E program has been instrumental in building our high-skilled workforce and maintaining our competitive edge.

260E Program Track Record & Economic Impact

Through an enduring partnership with **Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC)**, Kunkel & Associates has leveraged 260E funding to scale operations, expand market share, and upskill local talent.

Program Metric	Detail / Value
Community College Partner	Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC)
Completed 260E Projects	6 distinct projects since 2007
Employees Upskilled	82 new hires directly trained
Direct Training Funding Received	$618,785

Roles & Specialized Skill Development

The flexibility of the 260E program allows customized training across operational, technical, and client-facing roles, including Account Managers, Account Executives, Nurse Case Managers, Benefits Managers, Insurance Marketing Managers, IT Specialists, and back-office support staff.

Key training categories funded include:

- **Regulatory, Compliance & Licensing Training:** Ensuring strict adherence to state and federal insurance regulations and maintaining professional credentials.
- **Technical & Product Coverage Training:** In-depth risk management analysis and specialized policy coverage design.
- **Sales, Business & Marketing Negotiation Training:** Developing commercial negotiation skills to win and retain regional accounts.
- **Account Servicing & Claims Advocacy Training:** High-touch client care, ongoing service management, and complex claims advocacy.

Legislative Concerns Regarding House File 2799 (HF 2799)

As Kunkel & Associates plans for continued workforce expansion in Dubuque, proposed changes under **House File 2799 (HF 2799)** present significant operational and financial challenges:

1. **Narrowed Reimbursable Training Scope:** Proposed restrictions on eligible training types risk excluding the customized, industry-specific coursework essential to insurance, compliance, and risk management operations.
2. **Mandatory 30% Employer Match:** Introducing a 30% matching funds requirement—which was not required during our prior six successful projects—creates new financial hurdles for growing Iowa businesses and reduces program accessibility.

Call to Action & Future Recommendations

The adaptability and local administration of the 260E program are essential drivers of Iowa's business recruitment and expansion strategies. To ensure Iowa businesses remain competitive, Kunkel & Associates urges state leadership to:

- **Preserve Program Flexibility:** Maintain broad eligibility criteria so businesses can deliver the technical, regulatory, and specialized training required by modern service industries.
- **Protect Local Community College Partnerships:** Keep decision-making and program administration at the local level with institutional partners like NICC.
- **Sustain Incentive Strength:** Avoid cost-shifting mechanisms, such as mandatory employer matches, that place additional financial strain on expanding middle-market firms.

Continued state support through the Iowa New Jobs Training Program will allow Kunkel & Associates to create new jobs, upskill Iowa workers, and drive economic growth in Northeast Iowa.