



2021 SB 2164
House Industry, Business and Labor Committee
Representative Mike Lefor, Chairman
March 22, 2021

Chairman Lefor and members of the House Industry, Business and Labor Committee, I am Melissa Hauer, General Counsel of the North Dakota Hospital Association (NDHA). I testify in support of Engrossed Senate Bill 2164 and ask that you give this bill a **Do Pass** recommendation.

NDHA urges you to support the bill because it will provide an avenue to license professionals more quickly, such as physicians, nurses, respiratory therapists, and other health care providers, not only when there is a disaster, but also when there is an emergency.

We saw how important it was for the health care system to be able to respond quickly during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the disease spread, more patients needed care and yet hospital staff was also becoming sick or had to quarantine because they had close contact with someone who was infected. It was a time of great uncertainty and there was a great deal of effort and cost expended by hospitals to make sure there was adequate staff to take care of patients. NDHA worked with several professional licensing boards to do what we could to speed licensing of scarce health care professionals, such as re-licensing retired nurses, during that time. We are grateful to those Boards for working with us and we appreciated that some had the ability to adapt to the situation under existing law and administrative rules. Some were able, for example, to issue temporary or emergency licenses that required an applicant to undergo some sort of regulatory review, but on a shortened timeline to help them get to work as quickly as possible.

This bill would give additional flexibility to professional licensing boards to react quickly in an emergency or a disaster, such as giving them the ability to adopt temporary emergency rules to

help abate an emergency or disaster that threatens the health, safety, or welfare of the public. When an unprecedented crisis happens, like COVID-19, it requires swift action on many issues, including the process for licensing essential workers. Temporary suspension of occupational licensing laws and granting emergency rulemaking power is a beneficial approach to take to help manage an emergency or disaster.

For these reasons, NDHA supports the bill and asks that you give it a Do Pass recommendation. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Hauer, General Counsel
North Dakota Hospital Association