



March 30, 2021

Written testimony to:
67th Legislative Assembly
Senate Political Subdivisions Committee

HB 1323

Chairman Senator Burckhard and Committee Members:

My name is Renae Moch, MBA, FACMPE, and I am the President for the ND Public Health Association (NDPHA). I am submitting this written testimony on behalf of NDPHA in **opposition of HB 1323**.

Public health laws have been in place for more than a century for the health and safety of residents. Basic public health mitigation strategies such as mask mandates are critical actions to respond to public health emergencies and lessen the impact of infectious disease outbreaks. Public health professionals and researchers agree that masks are a simple and cost-effective way to reduce the spread of COVID-19, and to save lives and livelihoods.

Mask mandates and public health mitigation measures are recommendations based on scientific research and guidelines set forth by the Center for Disease Control. These mandates are done to protect the residents of North Dakota. Limiting the ability for government officials to enact proven public health mitigation measures puts the health and safety of our communities and residents at risk.

In this past year we have lived with a global pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has been unlike any pandemic in history; it is unprecedented. As of March 29, 2021, 1,466 of our fellow North Dakotans have tested positive and died while infected with COVID-19, yet legislation such as HB 1323 is being proposed to further dilapidate the already weakened public health system. Now is the time to stand with public health. We ask you as public health professionals to support our efforts to protect the health and safety of our residents during public health emergencies and prevent future catastrophic events in the future.

According to data from the ND Department of Health, the statewide mask mandate implemented on November 13, 2020 worked to reduce active cases by 85%, reduced hospitalizations by 70% and deaths decreased by 86% from implementation through the end of the mask mandate in January 2021. Many deaths could have been prevented if a mandate been implemented sooner. **Please vote NO on HB 1323.**

Renae Moch, MBA, FACMPE, President
North Dakota Public Health Association