

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2221 (SB2221)

3-17-2025

Chair Ruby and Members of the House Human Services Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 2221 (SB2221). This bill is crucial in strengthening North Dakota's nursing workforce by supporting the development of qualified nursing educators. It provides financial assistance to those who are advancing their education in exchange for contributing to the education of the next generation of nurses as clinical instructors.

Problem:

- **Nursing Shortage:** North Dakota faces a significant nursing shortage, which has forced healthcare facilities to rely on traveling nurses and internally educated nurses to fill the gap. This highlights the urgent need for more qualified nurses and nursing educators to support our healthcare system.
- **Lack of Qualified Nursing Educators:** Across the state there is a shortage of qualified nursing educators to teach the next generation of nurses, even more so in rural areas where these professionals are in high demand.

Solution:

- **Building Our Own Nursing Workforce:** A key solution to this problem is to build our own nursing workforce from the ground up. **Step one is increasing the pool of qualified nurses to teach future nurses.** By supporting those who are both advancing their education **and** teaching future nurses, SB2221 directly addresses this gap.
- **Support for MSN-Qualified Educators:** SB2221 allows individuals who are in process or have completed a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) to teach clinical nursing courses to qualify for ND Career Builders scholarships and student loan repayment programs. This will help **incentivize more nursing professionals to pursue advanced degrees and become nursing educators.**

Benefits:

- **Building and Retaining a Qualified Workforce in Rural Communities:** SB2221 helps address the shortage of healthcare providers in rural areas by incentivizing nursing professionals to stay and work in these underserved communities. Additionally, it ensures that skilled nurses **remain in North Dakota**, supporting long-term workforce retention in areas where healthcare professionals are critically needed.
- **Allow Opportunities for Nursing Program Expansion:** allows future opportunities for creative collaboration between critical access hospitals and nursing programs (**more MSN prepared nurses to teach students and expand programs**).

In conclusion, SB2221 offers a vital solution to the nursing shortage in North Dakota by addressing the need to build our own nursing workforce from the ground up. By increasing the pool of qualified nursing educators and supporting them with financial incentives, **the bill fosters a cycle of growth and workforce development—ensuring that qualified educators continue to train new nurses, who in turn contribute to meeting the state's healthcare needs.** This approach not only strengthens the healthcare system but also supports the long-term development of a skilled, sustainable workforce. Passing this bill will ensure North Dakota's nursing professionals are well-prepared to serve the state's diverse populations. I urge the committee to support this important legislation.

Thank you and I will stand for any questions.

Dr. Beth Sanford
DNP, MSN, RN, ACN, CLC, LNC
President, North Dakota Nurses Association
President-Elect North Dakota Center for Nursing