

Senate Bill 2223
House Industry, Business and Labor
Presented by Dr. Rachel Iverson Schafer DHSc RD CSSD
03-12-2025

Chairman Warrey and Members of the Committee,

My name is Dr. Rachel Iverson Schafer, and I am a registered dietitian with experience in both clinical and telehealth settings. I am also an employee of the state; however, I am here today testifying as a private citizen and as a dietitian. I have taken personal time off to be here because I believe so strongly in the importance of SB 2223, which would expand licensure reciprocity for dietitians and improve access to telehealth services.

Throughout my career, I have worked in traditional clinical settings in hospitals, as well as in innovative telehealth programs, including serving as the manager of Sanford Health Plan's Lifestyle Medicine telehealth prevention clinic. In this role, I managed patient flow and collaborated with a team of dietitians to provide evidence-based nutrition education to patients with chronic conditions. Telehealth allowed us to expand access to care, ensuring that patients could receive high-quality nutrition support without the barriers of transportation or time constraints.

In October 2022, I was laid off from my position at Sanford Health, along with my entire team. Losing my job was an incredibly difficult experience, and my options for continuing to work as a dietitian were limited. If this bill had been in place then, I would have had more opportunities to secure remote work without facing the overwhelming financial burden of obtaining multiple state licenses. The uncertainty of job loss would not have been as daunting if I had been able to continue practicing through telehealth without restrictive barriers.

For many dietitians, the ability to provide care through telehealth is not just a convenience. It is essential for maintaining a viable career. This is especially true in North Dakota, where opportunities for dietitians are limited, and salaries do not always reflect the education and expertise required for our profession. Without licensure reciprocity, dietitians are often forced to leave the state in search of higher-paying jobs or face significant financial barriers to practicing across multiple states.

One of North Dakota's key missions is to become the healthiest state in the nation, and expanding access to dietitians through telehealth is a crucial step toward achieving that goal. SB 2223 directly supports this mission by ensuring that more residents, especially those in rural and underserved areas, have access to high-quality, evidence-based nutrition care from registered dietitians. Research consistently shows that access to nutrition counseling improves health outcomes, reduces healthcare costs, and enhances disease prevention efforts. Expanding licensure reciprocity would allow more North Dakotans to benefit from these critical services.

SB 2223 would not only have personally benefited me during my job loss, but it would also create opportunities for other dietitians to remain in North Dakota while growing their careers through remote practice. It would allow highly qualified professionals to continue serving patients from their homes instead of being pushed out of the profession due to unnecessary regulatory barriers.

I urge you to support this bill, not only for the dietitians working hard to provide essential nutrition care but also for the patients who will benefit from increased access to telehealth services. This bill is a step toward modernizing our profession, improving workforce retention, and ensuring that dietitians can continue to support the health and well-being of North Dakotans.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate the opportunity to share my experience and will stand for any questions.