

TESTIMONY OF
COLONEL PATRICK FLANAGAN
NORTH DAKOTA NATIONAL GUARD
BEFORE THE
SENATE AGRICULTURE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
13 MARCH 2025
HOUSE BILL 1078

Thank you, Chairman Luick and members of the committee, for the record I am Colonel Patrick Flanagan, Chief of Staff for the North Dakota Army National Guard. I am here today to testify in support of HB 1078 that would extend medical protection for our service members who have been injured or fallen ill as a direct result of their duties on state active-duty missions.

North Dakota's National Guard answers the call to serve during emergencies and other critical missions, placing themselves in harm's way for the good of our state and its people. When they are called to duty within the state, they are subject to the same risks of injury and illness as they would be on federal missions. Unfortunately, the protections and support provided after their state active-duty assignments conclude are not always as comprehensive as those offered for federal service.

This legislation aims to fill that gap by ensuring that all service members are covered for medical care, rehabilitation, and related treatments necessary to address injuries or illnesses they incurred while on state active duty. Such protections are crucial, not only for the well-being of the individuals who serve but also to maintain a strong and ready force. By offering these protections, we demonstrate to our service members that we honor their sacrifices and are committed to supporting them, not just during missions but long after they end.

Many neighboring states have implemented similar policies, recognizing that an injured or ill service member's recovery process is often lengthy, and the absence of guaranteed medical protection can lead to financial and physical hardship. In some cases, without continued coverage, service members may face significant out-of-pocket costs for injuries directly tied to their service to our state. Additionally, this kind of assurance strengthens morale, as service members are aware that they have support in their times of need.

The legislation before us provides a straightforward but critical promise: that if you serve North Dakota and are injured or become ill in the line of duty, we will support your journey to recovery without unnecessary burden. Extending these protections is the right thing to do and aligns with North Dakota's long-standing tradition of valuing and supporting those who serve.

I urge this committee and our legislature to pass this legislation, ensuring that our service members have the necessary protections and support they deserve.

Thank you and I will stand for questions.