

**Testimony Relating to the National Council for State Authorization
Reciprocity Agreements Membership
Senate Education Committee
March 12, 2025
House Bill 1064**

Chairman Beard and Members of the Committee, my name is Nikki Wegner, and I am the President at the North Dakota Long Term Care Association. I write today to testify in support of House Bill 1064 as amended and respectfully ask that you give this bill a Do Pass recommendation.

The healthcare workforce shortage is one of the most pressing challenges facing long term care in North Dakota, particularly in nursing. Skilled nursing and basic care facilities across the state, from rural communities to urban areas are struggling to recruit and retain qualified caregivers to meet the needs of an aging population.

That is why we were initially concerned about HB 1064 as introduced. The original language would have restricted some accredited online healthcare programs from educating North Dakota's future workforce, limiting much-needed training opportunities for nurses, social workers, and other critical healthcare professionals.

The bill, as amended, now preserves access to accredited online institutions that meet federal standards. This change is critical for long term care, where facilities often rely on online education programs to help staff further their training while continuing to work in their communities. The flexibility of online education is particularly valuable for rural areas, where traditional in-person programs may not be accessible.

To address the workforce crisis in long term care, we must keep all education pathways open. The amended bill strikes the right balance, ensuring quality education while protecting opportunities for individuals pursuing careers in healthcare.

For these reasons, we **support the amended bill** and urge you to give it a **Do Pass** recommendation.

Thank you for your time,

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