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1515 Burnt Boat Drive
Suite C #325
Bismarck, ND 58503
701-335-6376

**Senate Human Services Committee
Senator Lee, Chair
Testimony in Support of HCR 3014
Tuesday, March 11, 2025**

Good morning, Chairman Lee, Vice Chairman Weston, and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee. My name is Dr. Penny Briese, and I've been a registered nurse in North Dakota for 20 years and a nurse educator for 15 of those years. I am also the Director of Advocacy for the North Dakota Nurses Association (NDNA).

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support** of HCR 3014.

As a nurse educator, I see the young, shining faces of nurses in training on a daily basis. I witness their eagerness to learn and grow into nurses capable of caring for the sick and dying. I am, however, saddened that even at the level of nursing training, these young people have faced violence in their clinical settings. Recently, as the NDNA Director of Advocacy, I sent out a request for nursing student testimony about being assaulted. I received dozens of stories from these future nurses, many of whom described already being assaulted as Certified Nurses Assistants (CNAs) and how afterwards they struggled with the decision to even begin nursing school. One student stated they were so frightened by their encounter that they quit their CNA job. Another student related being so badly bruised from their violent encounter that they were embarrassed to go outside, lest someone ask them what happened. Can you imagine?

I have heard many stories from my nurse colleagues as well, stories of being slapped, kicked, groped, spat at, pinched, having things thrown at them, being cursed at and even having their lives threatened, and these were not the behaviors of patients suffering from dementia. We nurses are highly educated healthcare professionals and are more than able to tell the difference between the behaviors of a demented patient and someone who fully intends to do us harm. I, myself, being a retired Nationally Registered Emergency Medical Technician-Paramedic and ER nurse, have been assaulted in both arenas and I simply cannot find the logic behind the fact that, should I walk 100 feet down a hospital hallway from the ER to a patient's room and be assaulted, I would not have same protection under the law. This simply makes no sense to me. There must be repercussions for this kind of behavior directed towards healthcare providers who are simply doing their jobs. How are we going to attract and retain a solid nursing workforce in North Dakota if we continue to deny healthcare workers, including North Dakota's nursing students, the most basic protection afforded by law? Again, as a nurse educator, I look into the eyes of these young people, excited to begin their careers as nurses, and I am disheartened knowing that statistically, half of them will experience violence during their nursing careers.

So I ask you, on behalf of myself, my nursing colleagues, and the of the student nurses of North Dakota, please vote **YES** on HCR 1341. Thank you all for your consideration of this critical issue and for your service to North Dakotans.

Dr. Penny Briese, PhD, MS, BSN, RN, CHSE
Director of Advocacy
North Dakota Nurses Association
Associate Professor of Nursing and Simulation Lab Coordinator
University of Jamestown