

**House Education Committee
Chairman Mark Owens
March 17, 2021
SB 2272**

Chairman Owens and members of the House Education Committee:

My name is DJ Campbell and I am the Human Resources Executive Director at Sanford Health in Bismarck. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB 2272.

As you know, the biggest challenge North Dakota businesses and organizations face is workforce. Healthcare is no exception. Sanford Health in North Dakota currently has 770 unfilled job positions, including openings for nurses, respiratory therapists, lab technicians and patient care technicians.

In 2020, Sanford Bismarck spent more than \$25 million to hire 464 independent contract labor staff on varying assignments to offset staffing gaps in our clinics and hospitals. We are not alone—all North Dakota healthcare organizations face the same challenge. Growing demand in the region is raising wages and attracting students to more populated areas such as Minneapolis. Compounded with the growing demand for contract healthcare labor—which often offers higher wages than permanent hospital positions—we are facing an uphill battle to keep up with staffing demands.

In our endeavors to fill these positions, we have worked diligently to create and maintain workforce development, recruitment and retention programs including:

- Partnerships with area colleges and universities to operate healthcare workforce training programs
- Implementation of a K-12 career development program (including a full-time K-12 coordinator) designed to inspire youth to pursue healthcare career paths
- Aspire by Sanford, a career coaching service to help staff members who wish to pursue new careers in healthcare

The opportunity to add the State's Career Builders program to the tools we have to recruit and retain workforce is both appreciated and proving to be highly effective. By providing an incentive for recent graduates to stay and work in North Dakota, the State has created a successful approach to attracting new graduates, many of whom have taken on debt to finish their certificate or degree programs.

Though we have only just begun to implement the Career Builders workforce development program at Sanford, we are excited about the opportunity and strongly encourage you to continue this strategic initiative. We have partnered with the N.D. University System Career Builders team for a number of students already and are aiming to increase our engagement this year by working closely with North Dakota universities and colleges including North Dakota State University, Bismarck State College and the University of Mary.

Thank you for your consideration of SB 2272. I would stand for any questions you may have.

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