



2023 Senate Bill 2142
House Finance and Taxation Committee
Representative Craig Headland, Chairman
March 13, 2023

Chairman Headland and members of the House Finance and Taxation Committee, I am Melissa Hauer, General Counsel/Vice President of the North Dakota Hospital Association (NDHA). NDHA represents hospitals and health care systems across the state. I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 2142. We ask that you give this bill a **Do Pass** recommendation.

Hospitals are here today in support of this bill because it would help with our number one challenge: workforce. Hospitals across the state already employ workers from other countries. Physicians, nurses, lab techs, phlebotomists, housekeepers, and other workers come to the U.S. legally from all over the world, such as from the Philippines, India, Canada, Greece, and Jordan, just to name a few. Hospitals still struggle, however, to fill open positions. It was a challenge before the COVID-19 pandemic and remains so now. To give you an idea of the workforce challenge in nursing alone, NDHA conducted a hospital survey last summer which showed there were 1,326 hospital nurse openings throughout the state. And hospitals had to contract with staffing agencies for another 717 nurses. In total, hospitals have over 2,000 nurse openings.

Workers from other countries have the potential to ease this workforce challenge but getting those workers here isn't without its own challenges. Hospitals work with immigration offices, attorneys, and vendors to recruit international staff. It is my understanding that the cost to recruit ranges from \$10,000 - \$50,000 per individual, depending on the country. Not all hospitals, however, can afford to recruit workers this way. We believe a state office of immigration would make this process more efficient and affordable. We also believe having one entity in the state to coordinate the overall process would be extremely helpful.

Hospitals also support other parts of the bill. We like the idea of assisting immigrants with accessing housing, food, and other essential services. It is our responsibility to help make this a successful

transition so that workers not only come to North Dakota but want to make it their permanent home.

We do not have the magical answer to fill all these openings but having a state immigration office that is active in promoting the state to potential workers, assisting employers with the immigration process, and helping the workers get to North Dakota and stay is part of the answer.

Please give the bill a Do Pass recommendation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to respond to any questions.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Hauer, General Counsel/Vice President
North Dakota Hospital Association