

**Testimony on SB 2142**  
**House Finance and Taxation Committee**  
**March 13, 2023**

Good morning, Representative Headland and members of the House Finance and Taxation Committee. My name is Bonnie Vangerud, Vice Chair of the North Dakota Organization of Nurse Leaders. NDONL represents both critical access as well as acute care hospitals across North Dakota. We are here to support SB 2142 which serves to create an Office of Immigration.

Currently, there are numerous shortages of all industries not just healthcare throughout the state ND. However, as a result hospitals, long-term care facilities, clinics, etc. are utilizing international staff to fill full-time positions.

SB 2142 has been drafted to create an Immigration office to help all industries throughout the state to:

- Recruit international staff
- Expedite the immigration process and placement
- Support international staff with financial, legal, and immigration-related applications, forms, or other communication in order to stay in ND
- Assist international staff with basic housing, food, and other essential services once they arrive in the state
- Develop a communication system for international staff to share community resources and assistance
- Develop a fee system to sustain the function of this office.

At the hospital I work at in Fargo, 68% of their registered nursing staff are international nurses. We wouldn't be able to care for our patients if not for them; so we are eternally grateful for the international nurses! However, what I know is, that it takes a long time for these staff to get to the United States and in their positions, for example I interviewed a nurse in early 2017 and she arrived in 2021. So I am envisioning this office to help expedite getting staff to ND sooner, quicker and faster.

I also know one of our nurses had to return to Africa in order to interview at the embassy so he could bring his family here. He left at the beginning of April 2022 and he has not returned to Fargo and we do not know when this will happen. I am hopeful that this office would be able to help others like him be prepared with all the necessary paper work etc. so that it would be a smooth process.

I envision this office to have a 2-3 FTE's to get his office up and running. With the immense staffing needs in all industry throughout the state of ND this team will need to be very dynamic, creative and energetic.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Bonnie Vangerud, Vice Chair  
North Dakota Office of Nurse Leaders  
5225 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave. South  
7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Fargo, ND 58104  
(701)793-8437