

March 6, 2023

Re: Testimony in support of SB 2344

Dear Chairman Headland, Vice Chairman Hagert, and members of the House Finance & Tax Committee,  
Good morning!

I'm Dr. Beth Sanford, President-Elect of the North Dakota Nurses Association and a member of the Nursing Recruitment and Retention committee, comprised of members of state nursing associations.

We are bringing forward this bill SB2344, combined student loan repayment for both RNs and Public Health. I am here to testify regarding the RN student loan repayment portion, as it is an immediate strategy to attract a nursing workforce to meet staffing demands.

Offering student loan forgiveness has been used for years to attract teachers and doctors to rural areas. Hospitals in small communities sometimes offer supporting loan reimbursement. It works for the agreement period. However, the cost of nursing school has risen tremendously since the initiation of these programs, with students graduating with 40-80K of debt.

In addition, this bill can help encourage the further master's level education of desperately needed nursing educators. With this loan repayment, nurses could obtain a master's degree and continue to work in direct patient care, while teaching a course for a local nursing program—meeting community needs for staff nurses and nurse educators alike.

As a nursing educator myself, I have found that loan forgiveness is essentially a tiebreaker for an individual making the decision of which profession to choose, and where to buy a home, live, and work.

The profession of nursing needs to do something drastic now to encourage North Dakota residents and residents of other states to choose "nursing" in North Dakota.

North Dakota needs active strategies to grow its own nurses-- Loan Forgiveness Works.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Beth Sanford, DNP, MSN, RN, ACN, CLC

President-Elect of the North Dakota Nurses Association