



2023 HOUSE BILL 1502

House Human Services Committee

Robin Weisz, Chairman

January 23, 2023

Chairman Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee. I am Chris Meeker, a board-certified emergency physician and I serve as chief medical officer at Sanford Health Bismarck. I am here to testify in opposition to House Bill 1502. I respectfully ask that you give this bill a **Do Not Pass** recommendation.

Section 1: Medical Certification

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) regulate medical certification/death certificates to ensure appropriate causes of death are reported nationally. In addition to personal, legal purposes of the death certificate, public officials use death certificates to compile data on various statistics including leading causes of death. To support this objective, CMS has rules around reporting COVID-19 on death certificates, limiting reporting to those cases when COVID-19 actually caused or contributed to death.

Section 2: COVID-19 and experimental vaccinations

HB 1502 would prohibit healthcare facilities from requiring vaccines, including all routine vaccinations that would be deemed "experimental" as established by the four-part criteria identified in the bill. This law would be in direct conflict with the current OSHA and CMS vaccine requirements, potentially threatening hospital Medicare/Medicaid funding. Because more than 60 percent of hospital services in North Dakota are paid for by Medicare and Medicaid, the financial impact would be devastating.

Requiring healthcare workers to be vaccinated is not new. Hospitals have long required vaccinations for measles, mumps, rubella, chicken pox, hepatitis B and influenza with remarkable impact on staff and patient safety. As is the COVID-19 vaccine, these

immunizations are well-researched, safe and provide incredible protection from the greater risk of illness.

The law would also prohibit promoting vaccines. As a healthcare provider, our duty is to practice evidence-based care to protect both our employees and the patients we serve. Vaccinations are a global health success story, saving millions of lives every year. Immunization is a key component of primary health care and it's one of the best health investments money can buy.

Section 3: Access to care

This section suggests healthcare providers may at times choose to not provide services to a patient based upon the patient's vaccination status. There are multiple federal requirements and ethical obligations that prohibit a provider from denying care to patients seeking services.

In summary, this bill would have too many negative consequences for health care providers. And that is why we oppose the bill and ask that you give it a Do Not Pass recommendation. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Chris Meeker, MD
North Dakota Hospital Association