

Testimony House Bill 1121 – IN SUPPORT
Judiciary Committee
Sixty-Eighth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota

Tuesday, January 10, 2023

Dear Chairman Klemin and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

As I rise this morning and prepare for my day as a Nurse Educator, it is once again with a heavy heart as I am all too familiar with the world into which I will soon be sending these bright, eager young nurses. Every day in America, nurses are assaulted on the job; we are subjected to slaps, pinches, punches, bodily fluids being spat or flung at us, and even verbal abuse and threats on our very lives and the lives of our families. This abuse comes not only from patients, but also from family members who take out their frustrations on the nurse whose only desire is to care for their loved one. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, these abuses and attacks have only increased and it is a frequent occurrence for me to receive an email or text from a former student, frustrated and considering leaving the field of nursing because of an attack and asking for my counsel.

As a Registered Nurse who has spent the majority of her life serving in healthcare in rural North Dakota, in Oakes, LaMoure, Edgeley and Jamestown, I remember being taken aback when I transitioned from a medic on the ambulance to being an Emergency Room nurse, both positions where I was fully protected by the law, to working bedside hospital and long-term healthcare. Suddenly, I wasn't protected. And the transition from ER to bedside was nothing more than a walk down the hospital hallway. This is unfathomable and it must be resolved.

Yesterday, January 9th, was Nurses Day at the Capitol and throughout the day, many of you were able to interact with nurses and nursing students from across the state. When introducing your esteemed colleagues, Senator Kristin Roers and Representative Karen Rohr, I asked that the students in attendance stand up and be recognized. I then asked those who felt that they had already, as student nurses, been subject to physical and verbal assault; my heart sunk as over half of them once again rose to their feet.

But this morning, as I rise and ready myself for the work of preparing the next generation of nurses who will be caring for me, caring for you and your loved ones, I do so with hope. Because those nursing students were there yesterday. They have put their trust in all of you, as our state legislators, to answer their plea for full protection under the law. Please listen to them and to all of us who serve as nurses in North Dakota as we ask you to pass HB 1121: the Healthcare Worker Assault bill. You have the power to protect us so that we can care for the citizens of North Dakota.

Thank You.



Dr. Penny Briese, RN
Associate Professor of Nursing
Simulation Lab Coordinator
University of Jamestown