

Good morning Chairman Sorvaag and members of the Senate Education and Environment Committee.

My name is Charys Kunkel. I live in New Salem, ND, and am the Director of NDSU Nursing at Sanford Health in Bismarck. I am also speaking on behalf of Carla Gross, Associate Dean for the NDSU School of Nursing in Fargo, who is attending virtually. We are testifying in support of Senate bill 2288, which will award matching funds to nursing programs for projects that advance nursing education.

Nursing education serves as the pipeline to meet nursing workforce needs. As you are well aware, there is a critical nursing shortage that is expected to escalate in the years to come. The fact that there is a shortage of nursing faculty from those retiring and leaving the field adds to this critical nursing shortage. Nursing programs in North Dakota have expanded student enrollments over the past ten years to meet workforce needs, even though our budgets have not expanded to match. In addition, the costs of high-fidelity simulation labs and equipment have increased substantially over the past ten years. High-fidelity simulation supplements clinical experiences by providing students with a safe place to practice nursing skills while being exposed to common and complex clinical experiences. This bill will support nursing programs with funding to meet critical needs in nursing education or to expand their programs.

As a land grant university, NDSU is committed to meeting the workforce needs of the state. Since 2015, NDSU has expanded our Pre-Licensure BSN program, doubling the number of students admitted to Fargo. The Bismarck site was added to meet the healthcare needs in western North Dakota. The nursing program has added an online RN to BSN program to advance nursing knowledge and has established a highly respected online LPN to BSN program. Both of these online programs meet the needs of place-bound students who are often from rural or underserved areas. In addition, the School of Nursing has a Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) program that is offered in Fargo and Bismarck. Past grant efforts within the FNP program have been used to place students in rural areas for their practicum experiences and to increase the supply of advanced care providers in these areas. Our current HRSA grant provides Family Nurse Practitioners with a residency program that gives them the advanced skills needed to provide care in rural areas, including emergent and acute care settings. The NDSU School of Nursing is committed to continue exploring new programs or projects to increase enrollment capacity and recruitment efforts. It is our ultimate goal to educate excellent nurses who are practice ready.

With all due respect, we ask you to vote in favor of this bill. The funding will provide support to nursing programs across the state to educate future nurses.

This concludes my testimony,

Charys Kunkel, Director of NDSU Nursing at Sanford

Carla Gross, Associate Dean, NDSU School of Nursing