

January 10, 2023

ND Senate Human Services Committee

Madame Chairman Lee and Committee Members,

My name is Tim Mathern and I served on the interim Acute Psychiatric Treatment Committee. A major issue coming up throughout the deliberation process was the shortage of behavioral health staff around the state. SB 2127 is before you as one measure to address that situation.

Some sessions ago we developed the behavioral health student loan program. This bill makes a few tweaks to the program and adds some money to enhance it.

The first change is on line 18 adding the profession of "psychiatric registered nurse". The goal here is to give added incentive to persons with this background who will be working full-time in psychiatric facilities where they take the added risk. The amount available is greater than nurses in other sections of the century code.

The second change is on page 3 line 1 changing 5 to 3 years as being the years of service required to gain the loan forgiveness. I was told that the five-year commitment has become too long to attract applicants to this field of practice.

The third change is that of the appropriation which is equal to the amount requested but short of the amount of money available in the most recent round of loan forgiveness granted.

I have spoken to health officials about some inconsistencies that need to be addressed in the bill and I have encouraged them and others to bring matters to your committee for amendments as you see fit.

I ask you for a Do Pass recommendation on SB2127.

Thank you.

Senator Tim Mathern