



Testimony House Bill 1121 – IN SUPPORT
Senate Judiciary Committee

Tuesday, March 21, 2023

Chairman Larson and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

My name is Sherri Miller, and I am a registered nurse in North Dakota – District 30. I have worked in healthcare for almost twenty-five years, and I have been the Executive Director of the North Dakota Nurses Association (NDNA) since 2018. I am here today on behalf of NDNA to ask you to support HB 1121, relating to assault on a healthcare facility employee.

The mission of the North Dakota Nurses Association is to advance the nursing profession by promoting the professional development of nurses, fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the safety and well-being of nurses in the workplace, and advocating on healthcare issues affecting nurses and the public. The NDNA Advocacy Platform has workplace safety as a top priority.

While workplace violence is not uncommon in general, it is 5 times more prevalent in the healthcare industry. In speaking with student nurses in the state last month, I heard a sad story of being verbally, physically, and sexually assaulted all in one eight-hour shift. One individual reported she was the only CNA working at the time, was discouraged to report it, and that she could not press charges.

Violence against healthcare workers has worsened during the pandemic. Nurses make up the largest portion of the healthcare professionals. In a recent 2022 survey of 2,500 hospital nurses, 48% reported having experienced violence in the workplace, a 31% increase since the year before. Although anyone working in a hospital or healthcare facility may become a victim of violence, nurses and other staff directly are at higher risk because they provide the most direct care to patients, but they're not always prepared to defend themselves. Nurses specifically are often the first healthcare staff to interact with patients and sometimes the only health professional a patient will ever see.

NDNA is a constituent state of the American Nurses Association (ANA), and their position statement reads, *"a safe work environment promotes physical and*



psychological well-being. If members of the healthcare team do not feel safe, the work environment is left vulnerable, and everyone's safety is compromised."

Amending the current statute in the North Dakota Century Code is an important protection for all healthcare workers (whatever setting they are working in). They provide care, support, and treatment for the sick, the injured and the dying and support their families and communities. They need this protection.

We respectfully request your support of this legislation.

Sincerely,

Sherri Miller, BSN, RN
Executive Director
North Dakota Nurses Association