

Testimony Relating to Office of Legal Immigration
House Industry, Business and Labor Committee
January 13, 2025
House Bill 1493

Chairman Warrey and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Nikki Wegner, and I am the President of the North Dakota Long Term Care Association. We represent 182 nursing facilities, basic care facilities, and assisted living facilities. I am writing to express my **opposition to House Bill 1493**, which proposes repealing the **Office of Legal Immigration**—a critical resource in addressing North Dakota’s workforce challenges.

As you know, North Dakota is struggling with workforce shortages across many industries, and long term care is no exception. Our ability to provide care to some of the state’s most vulnerable citizens, seniors and individuals with disabilities depends on a stable and reliable workforce. The Office of Legal Immigration was created to help address this challenge by identifying solutions to attract and retain foreign-born talent. In the short time it has been operational, this office has made significant progress in supporting long term care providers, even those who had never previously engaged in international recruitment efforts.

Through this office, our members have:

- **Gained valuable education and direction** on how to navigate legal immigration pathways for workforce recruitment.
- **Participated in informal pilot projects** that explore innovative solutions for bringing skilled workers into the state, despite federal immigration backlogs.
- **Connected with reputable companies** that help place work-authorized individuals into jobs that match their skill sets with our workforce needs.

These solutions take time to develop, but they are critical steps in solving our workforce crisis. When we advocated for this office last session, our goal was to make North Dakota a leader in recruiting and retaining talent. Repealing this office now would be a step backward.

North Dakota’s long term care industry needs every tool available to recruit and retain employees. The **State Office of Legal Immigration** is one of those tools and eliminating it now would mean abandoning promising efforts before they have had the opportunity to bear fruit.

I urge you to vote **against** this bill and allow the office to continue its vital work.
Thank you for your consideration.

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