



2025 SB 2031

Senate Workforce Development Committee

Senator Mike Wobbema, Chairman

January 9, 2025

Chairman Wobbema and members of the Senate Workforce Development Committee, I am Tim Blasl, President of the North Dakota Hospital Association (NDHA). I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 2031. I ask that you give this bill a **Do Pass** recommendation.

Hospitals appreciate the Legislature's interest in contract nurse agencies. As I am sure you are all aware, the need for nursing staff was critical during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many hospitals had to turn to contract nurses in order to care for the increased numbers of patients. The number of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations are considerably down from where they were then but staff shortages and labor costs remain major issues for hospitals in our state. When a hospital is forced to use contract labor, it comes at a premium. And, not all nurse agencies are transparent about the training and experience of the nurses they send.

We appreciated the legislative study of contract nurse agencies during the last interim and the ability to provide input as to how the use of nurse agency staff has impacted hospitals and other health care providers. Regulation of contract nurse agencies is something that a number of other states have enacted or are looking at as well. With nurse contract labor costs and workforce shortages threatening the financial viability of hospitals, common sense regulation of nurse staffing agencies is appropriate.

While we welcome more accountability and transparency from nurse agencies, we also wanted to make sure that regulation was not so onerous as to drive such agencies away from our state or cause them to increase their prices, which would have just been passed on to hospitals. We believe this bill strikes the right balance. Hospitals, along with numerous stakeholders such as the long term care association, the nurse association, and

even several contract nurse agencies, met several times during the interim to discuss and provide input on the bill draft. We all agreed it is imperative for there to be accountability and transparency so that contract nursing agencies are acting in the best interest of nurses and patients and to ensure safety and quality in the services they provide.

In summary, we support passage of this bill and hope that you will give it a **Do Pass** recommendation.

I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tim Blasl, President
North Dakota Hospital Association