

**Testimony in Support of Standards for Contract Nursing Agency
Standards
Senate Workforce Development Committee
January 9th, 2025
Senate Bill 2031**

Good afternoon, Chairman Wobbema and members of the Senate Workforce Committee. My name is Blake Kragnes, and I serve as the Administrator of Knife River Care Center, a skilled nursing facility in Beulah, ND as well as a board member for the North Dakota Long Term Care Association representing the southwest region of the state. I am here to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 2031, which proposes baseline licensing measures for contract nursing agencies in North Dakota.

As a nursing home administrator, my foremost priority is the well-being and safety of the residents entrusted to our care. In recent years, nursing facilities across the state have placed an increased reliance on contract nursing agencies to retain appropriate and safe staffing levels. While these agencies are invaluable in helping us maintain care standards, the absence of clear, baseline licensing requirements, as outlined in SB 2031, create challenges that directly affect both residents and facilities. Requirements outlined in SB 2031 are all items nursing facilities are required to attain and retain for employees of their organization.

Senate Bill 2031 addresses several of these challenges by introducing a baseline framework to create curbs and gutters for contract nursing agencies. Among the bill's many provisions, I would like to highlight three key areas that will positively impact care provided to our residents:

1. Licensing Requirements and Standards for Operation

Licensing will ensure that all nursing agencies meet a baseline level of accountability and professionalism. By requiring background checks, annual evaluations, and comprehensive record-keeping, the bill sets the stage for greater consistency amongst agency personnel. For nursing homes across the state, the standards outlined SB 2031 are the minimum standards required during our new hire process to be our employees at nursing homes. Adding

these licensing requirements would bring consistency between staffing agency and nursing home requirements.

2. Complaint and Accountability Systems

The establishment of a formal complaint system ensures that issues with agency staff can be documented and resolved transparently. This is critical for protecting residents and maintaining trust in the care provided. As an administrator, I have witnessed the challenges of navigating concerns about temporary staff without a defined reporting mechanism. This bill's provisions will give facilities a structured process to address such concerns effectively. For nursing homes across the state there is an already established complaint process/procedure for concerned citizens to report.

3. Alignment with Federal Staffing Mandates

With the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services mandating 24/7 RN coverage, rural facilities like ours face unique difficulties in meeting these standards. Senate Bill 2031 ensures that contract nursing agencies supplying this vital workforce are held to baseline standards, allowing us to rely on their support confidently as we strive to comply with federal regulations.

While I support the intent of this bill, I urge the committee to consider the administrative and financial implications for both agencies and healthcare facilities. For example, the \$2,000 non-refundable licensing fee and the requirement for comprehensive personnel records may place additional strain on smaller agencies, potentially limiting their availability in rural areas. I respectfully suggest exploring mechanisms to ensure that these measures are implemented equitably, balancing oversight with accessibility.

In conclusion, Senate Bill 2031 represents a necessary step toward safeguarding the quality and accountability of contract nursing services in North Dakota. Most staffing agencies operating in the state of ND, DTN staffing, Interim Healthcare and more, are already following these standards and have respectively worked with us to mold this legislation into what it is today. By establishing clear, minimum standards, this legislation not only protects our most vulnerable residents but also strengthens the partnership between healthcare facilities and staffing agencies.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

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