



2025 SB 2221
Senate Workforce Development Committee
Senator Mike Wobbema, Chairman
January 31, 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 2221. I ask that you give this bill a **Do Pass** recommendation.

This bill expands the qualifying criteria for the skilled workforce student loan repayment program. To be eligible to receive student loan repayment grants under the current program, an applicant must:

- 1) Have successfully completed an educational program from an institution of higher education;
- 2) Have a student loan with the Bank of North Dakota or other participating lender;
- 3) Reside and work in North Dakota in an eligible high-demand or emerging occupation; and
- 4) Have met and continue to meet any requirements established in applicable state board of higher education procedures.

This bill would add that the third requirement is met if an applicant has completed a Master of Science degree in nursing while teaching four clinical credits per year and resides and works in the state in an occupation requiring the degree. Section two of the bill adds that a Master of Science degree in nursing, if the applicant teaches four clinical credits per calendar year, is a qualifying educational program for student loan repayment.

Hospitals support the bill because workforce is our number one challenge. We struggle to hire enough workers in almost all health care-related occupations, but nurses in particular are always in high demand. Anything we can do to encourage more people to go into nursing – and teach nursing - is beneficial. Expanding the list of those who qualify for student loan repayment as this bill does would be helpful to achieve that goal.

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

Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tim Blasl, President
North Dakota Hospital Association