



**Testimony in Support of SB 2235
Senate Education Committee
January 27, 2021**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Education Committee. My name is Liz Tofteland and I am testifying in favor of Senate Bill 2235 on behalf of the North Dakota School Nurse Organization (NDSNO). I currently work for Central Regional Educations Association as the ND eCare School Health Program Manager. The ND eCare School Health Program is a partnership program which provides school nurse services to ND schools through a telehealth platform. I serve on the NDSNO executive board as the Public Relations Director.

NDSNO is excited about the possibility of a state grant program to assist school districts in providing additional school nurse services to students. We see firsthand the difference that a school nurse can make in the lives of students and staff. The work of school nurses can lead to decreased absenteeism, enhanced learning, increased referrals for vision, hearing, dental, and increased vaccination compliance. School nurses can also provide peace of mind to parents of children with chronic conditions such as diabetes, severe food allergies, asthma, and seizure disorders.

The funding in SB 2235 would go a long way in helping school districts experience the benefits of school nursing.

NDSNO would recommend to this committee to amend SB 2235 to provide additional flexibility to the ND Department of Health and to school districts that would apply for these funds. We recommend allowing school districts to apply for the funds for the amount they feel they need. This gives school districts the freedom to consider their needs and increases the likelihood that the school district continues the school nursing positions beyond the timeframe of the grant. It could also provide more school districts with the opportunity to take advantage of these grants.

We would also recommend leaving it up to the ND Department of Health and the school districts to determine the appropriate nursing services that are to be provided under these grants. School districts have different needs and may not need all the services as outlined in the bill or may have other health needs not identified in the bill.

We've heard from many administrators across the state that they find value in school nursing. This year especially has highlighted the need for access to staff who have a strong understanding in disease and infection control during this COVID-19 pandemic. Our problem isn't convincing people that the services we can provide are valuable and needed. Our hurdle has been finding a way to fund school nursing programs. This grant program would allow for school districts to evaluate the value of a school nurse with a low financial risk.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide our support for this bill.

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