



2021 SB 2083
Senate Human Services Committee
Senator Judy Lee, Chairman
January 26, 2021

Chairman Lee and members of the Senate Human Services Committee, I am Melissa Hauer, General Counsel for the North Dakota Hospital Association (NDHA). I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 2083. I ask that you give this bill a **Do Pass** recommendation.

Hospitals support the change provided in section four of the bill because it will streamline and clarify the process of child abuse and neglect reporting for mandated reporters, including those working in health care such as physicians and nurses. In a hospital, there can be hundreds of employees who are mandated to report suspected child abuse and neglect. Often, one patient can trigger the duty for several employees to report, such as when a child comes into the emergency department and is treated by several nurses and physicians. One such episode of care may require five, six, or more employees to report the suspected abuse or neglect of one child. If each one does not file a separate report, have they failed to fulfill their duty to report? That is the question that would be resolved by this bill.

The bill would allow an entity employing more than 25 individuals who are required to report suspected child abuse or neglect to designate one individual to file reports on behalf of the staff members and volunteers of the entity. This will ensure that the reports are made more efficiently and timely. And it will ensure that each person who dealt with the same case has fulfilled his or her duty to report. A report filed by the designated individual will supply the first and last name, title, and contact information for every staff member or volunteer of the entity who is believed to have direct knowledge of the facts surrounding the report. The bill clarifies that this single report from the designated individual will meet the reporting requirement on behalf of staff members and volunteers of the entity.

This change would not preclude a staff member or volunteer from also reporting the suspected child abuse and neglect directly to the department. It also requires a staff member or volunteer who has knowledge the designated individual has failed to report on behalf of the staff member or volunteer immediately to make a report. We agree with these important safeguards to ensure all suspected child abuse and neglect is reported promptly.

We also believe this change will assist the Department of Human Services in its work because it will not receive multiple reports from mandated reporters which all deal with the same incident. It will make their response to the report a bit easier if they do not have to ensure that multiple reports are reviewed to determine if they spring from the same incident and really should be assessed as one case.

In summary, we support the bill for these reasons and ask that you give it a Do Pass recommendation. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Hauer, General Counsel/VP
North Dakota Hospital Association