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1515 Burnt Boat Drive
Suite C #325
Bismarck, ND 58503
701-335-6376

House Human Services Committee
Representative Ruby, Chairman
Testimony in Support of SN 2221
Monday, March 17, 2025

Chairman Ruby, Vice Chairman Frelich and the House Human Services Committee:

My name is Dr. Penny Briese, and I have been a registered nurse in North Dakota for more than 20 years. I am a certified healthcare simulationist and nurse educator at the University of Jamestown and the Director of Advocacy for the North Dakota Nurses Association (NDNA). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of SB 2221.

As difficult as it has been to find qualified nurses to staff our hospitals, long-term care facilities and clinics here in North Dakota, it has been even more difficult to find and retain nurse educators to teach young people the art of nursing. The lack of nurse educators is a nationwide crisis, one that must be addressed if we are to sustain the workforce of our healthcare system. SB 2221 addresses North Dakota's pressing nursing shortage by integrating a master's program into the skilled workforce student loan repayment program. Quite often, it is merely the additional financial burden of pursuing a higher nursing degree that prevents nurses from returning to school, as they are often still paying student loans from obtaining their undergraduate nursing degree. This bill will encourage nurses to pursue master's level education by providing them with that essential financial assistance. These masters prepared nurses will be qualified to teach and, in return for financial assistance, will be required to work in North Dakota as an educator, teaching four clinical credits each year. The requirements of this bill will not only increase the pool of nurse educators but will also aid in the retention of our nursing workforce. Recipients of the financial assistance will also be required to live and work in North Dakota for a set period of time, hopefully becoming integrated in their communities and coming to love North Dakota as much as I do.

The NDNA is the sole professional organization representing all nurses in North Dakota and we are committed to implementing effective recruitment and retention strategies for our nursing workforce. This bill aligns with our mission: "to advance the nursing profession by promoting professional development and advocating for healthcare issues that impact both nurses and the public at large". SB 2221 supports this mission and would benefit nursing education by enabling nurses to pursue higher degrees, making them qualified to instruct and train new nurses right here in North Dakota.

I ask that you unanimously pass SB 2221 to ensure that North Dakota has enough nurse educators to train a more sustainable nursing workforce in our state. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Dr. Penny Briese, PhD, MS, BSN, RN, CHSE
Director of Advocacy
North Dakota Nurses Association
Associate Professor of Nursing
Simulation Lab Coordinator
University of Jamestown