

Testimony on Dietitian Licensure Compact
House Industry, Business and Labor Committee
March 12, 2025
Senate Bill 2223

Chairman Warrey and Members of the Committee. My name is Nikki Wegner, and I am the President with the North Dakota Long Term Care Association. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 2223. I respectfully ask that you give this bill a Do Pass recommendation.

Long term care facilities in North Dakota depend on licensed dietitians to ensure residents receive proper nutrition. Skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) are federally required to have a registered dietitian (RD) or other clinically qualified nutrition professional oversee their dietary programs, either as an employee or consultant. Basic care facilities, while not subject to the same federal requirements, must still meet state regulations that ensure residents' nutritional needs are met. However, recruiting and retaining these professionals, especially in rural areas, has been a persistent challenge.

Senate Bill 2223 would ease this burden by streamlining the licensure process for dietitians, improving access to medical nutrition therapy and other essential dietetic services for long term care residents. Proper nutrition is a critical component of quality care, supporting residents' overall health, chronic disease management, and recovery from illness or injury.

Interstate licensure compacts have already proven successful for other health care professionals in North Dakota, such as the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact (IMLC), the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC), the Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Compact (APRN Compact), the Physical Therapy Compact (PT Compact), and the Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact (PSYPACT). The Dietitian Licensure Compact would bring similar benefits by:

- Expanding access to dietetic services by recognizing licenses across member states.
- Enhancing public health and safety by ensuring dietitians meet consistent professional standards.
- Supporting spouses of relocating military members by reducing licensing barriers.
- Improving cooperation among states for licensure, investigation, and discipline.
- Holding providers accountable to state-specific practice standards.
- Facilitating telehealth services, allowing dietitians to provide care to more residents, regardless of location.

For long term care providers, this compact is especially important. Many residents have complex dietary needs, including those with diabetes, swallowing disorders, and other medical conditions requiring specialized nutrition support. However, the current shortage of dietitians makes it difficult for facilities, particularly in rural areas to consistently provide these critical services. By reducing licensure barriers, this bill would help ensure more residents receive the dietetic care they need to maintain their health and well-being.

In summary, Senate Bill 2223 would streamline licensure, expand access to essential dietetic services, and strengthen care for North Dakotans in long term care settings. I urge your support for this bill and ask for a **Do Pass** recommendation.

Thank you for your time.

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