



2023 Senate Bill 2288

Senate Appropriations Committee – Education and Environment Division

Senator Ronald Sorvaag, Chairman

February 6, 2023

Chairman Sorvaag and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee – Education and Environment Division, I am Tim Blasl, President of the North Dakota Hospital Association (NDHA). We support Senate Bill 2288 and ask that you give it a **Do Pass** recommendation.

Hospitals support this bill because it helps with our number one challenge: workforce.

To give an idea of how big this challenge is specifically in nursing, NDHA conducted a survey last summer. It showed that there were 1,326 nurse openings throughout the state. And hospitals contracted with staffing agencies for another 717 nurses. In total, hospitals have over 2,000 nurse openings.

The lack of nurses challenges our hospitals in both the rural and urban areas. Urban hospital wages have increased \$382 million since 2019, mainly due to contract labor. The escalating cost of contracted nursing staff and the upward pressure it puts on wages is not sustainable.

I do not have the magical answer to fill all these openings but adding state funds to supplement funds raised by the foundations of higher education institutions for projects dedicated to the advancement of nursing programs will be helpful in solving the nurse shortage.

Please give the bill a **Do Pass** recommendation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tim Blasl, President
North Dakota Hospital Association