



2023 House Bill 1018
Senate Appropriations Committee
Senator Brad Bekkedahl, Chairman
March 2, 2023

Chairman Bekkedahl and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I am Melissa Hauer, General Counsel/Vice President of the North Dakota Hospital Association (NDHA). We support engrossed House Bill 1018 and ask that you give it a **Do Pass** recommendation.

Hospitals support this bill because it helps with our number one challenge: workforce. The lack of health care workers is challenging for our hospitals in both rural and urban areas. It is difficult to find workers in nearly every health care employee group – not just physicians, advanced practice providers, and nurses but also lab techs, surgical techs, medical imaging techs, housekeeping, dietary, and many others. The health care provider shortage is not just an inconvenience, it is a public health crisis that was building even before the COVID-19 pandemic. To give an idea of how big this challenge is in nursing alone, NDHA conducted a survey that showed there are 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.

It is especially encouraging to see additional matching funds to assist in the recruitment, distribution, and supply of rural health care workers. We appreciate this investment in our hospitals and communities. We also appreciate funding for technical skill training grants which helps expand programs to provide worker training such as for Certified Nurse Assistants (CNA), funding for supporting the immigrant workforce, and the carryover of funding for the nonresident nurse employment recruitment program from the 2019 session.

We support any efforts to increase the health care workforce. We do not have the magical answer to fill all these openings but adding state funds in multiple areas as this bill does will be helpful. Please give the bill a **Do Pass** recommendation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Hauer, General Counsel/VP
North Dakota Hospital Association