



2023 House Bill 1502
Senate Human Services Committee
Senator Judy Lee, Chairman
March 14, 2023

Chair Lee and members of the Senate Human Services Committee. I am Chris Meeker, a board-certified emergency physician and I serve as chief medical officer at Sanford Health Bismarck. I am here to testify in opposition to House Bill 1502. I respectfully ask that you give this bill a **Do Not Pass** recommendation.

HB 1502 would prohibit hospitals from denying health care treatment or services to an individual based on that individual's severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2, identified as SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) vaccination status.

This bill seemingly suggests healthcare providers may at times choose to not provide services to a patient based upon the patient's vaccination status. That is simply not the case. There are multiple federal requirements and ethical obligations that prohibit a provider from denying care to patients seeking services.

A specific restriction on withholding treatment or services is a dangerous precedent to put into North Dakota Century Code. Why? Because it limits the decision-making capabilities of qualified medical professionals in unique and emergency circumstances to ensure the safety of patients, staff and community members. Healthcare systems take seriously their charge to ensure that evidence-based medical decision-making and treatment are exercised in accordance with evidence-based standards of care. Codifying exceptions to this process may create unnecessary barriers to maximizing safety in certain circumstances.

One example that this specific mandate would obstruct is the process followed to maximize safety for transplant patients. Further, we do not know what we may still learn about COVID-19 and its long-term effects. It is possible that other restrictions may need to be put in place to control spread of infection and this bill would needlessly tie our hands.

As a healthcare provider, our duty is to practice evidence-based care to protect both our employees and the patients we serve. This bill may unintentionally impede our ability to do so.

Please give the bill a **Do Not Pass** recommendation. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

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