



2023 SENATE BILL 2015
House Appropriations Committee – Government Operations Division
Representative David Monson, Chairman
March 7, 2023

Chairman Monson and members of the House Appropriations Committee Government Operations Division, I am Tim Blasl, President, of the North Dakota Hospital Association (NDHA). I provide this testimony in support of Senate Bill 2015 and ask that you give this bill a **Do Pass** recommendation.

Hospitals support this bill because it provides funding for indigent guardianship services grants. We support efforts to increase the reimbursement rate and number of corporate guardians. When a hospitalized patient is unable to make health care decisions for himself and does not have anyone qualified to make decisions for him, the patient can unfortunately be stuck in a hospital bed long after discharge should have happened. In a perfect world, the process of securing a guardian would take a few days to a week, but the process takes an average of 30-90 days. In some cases, it is much longer.

These situations present many challenges for the patient and hospital. When the patient is ready for discharge, but is waiting for guardianship services, the bed is not available for another patient who needs it. While the patient remains in limbo, the hospital has no one to make health care decisions for that patient. Hospitals cannot employ or choose guardians directly because the guardian could be viewed as lacking the necessary independence to make decisions as required by law. They must rely on the patient's family and friends or, if none are willing or able to serve, a corporate guardian, to initiate the process and serve.

By better funding indigent and corporate guardianship services, SB 2015 addresses these barriers and takes the right step toward more efficiently connecting vulnerable patients to the services they need. Please give the bill a **Do Pass** recommendation. Thank you for your time.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tim Blasl, President
North Dakota Hospital Association