



2025 HB 1311

House Political Subdivisions Committee

Representative Donald Longmuir, Chairman

January 23, 2025

Chairman Longmuir and members of the House Political Subdivisions Committee, I am Tim Blasl, President of the North Dakota Hospital Association (NDHA). I am here to testify in support of House Bill 1311. I ask that you give this bill a **Do Pass** recommendation.

There are several hospitals in our state that operate emergency medical services (EMS) operations and many of them rely heavily on volunteers, for example, to staff ambulance services. Our hospital members support the bill because workforce is the number one challenge they face. In rural parts of our state especially, it is increasingly difficult for ambulance services to find enough volunteers. Volunteerism continues to decline and is especially threatened in rural areas, where the population tends to be older. Fewer young people are stepping in to replace the older people who are retiring.

Adding to the decrease in volunteerism, many ambulance services feel the pressure of reimbursement that does not cover the cost of providing the service. Many operate at a loss. So, it is not always financially viable to replace volunteers with paid staff. We must find ways to keep costs low so that ambulances can continue to provide services in rural areas. Volunteers are a critical component. Limited funding, expanding coverage areas, increased educational requirements, and a cultural shift in volunteerism across generations means we need to be creative in finding new recruitment methods that attract more volunteers and keep them as long as possible. We believe that a study to determine barriers to recruitment and retention of volunteer emergency responders and to identify strategies to encourage volunteerism would help to stabilize the EMS system in our state.

In summary, we ask that you give HB 1311 a **Do Pass** recommendation.

I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tim Blasl, President
North Dakota Hospital Association