



2021 HB 1323
Senate Political Subdivisions Committee
Senator Randy Burckhard, Chairman
April 1, 2021

Chairman Burckhard and members of the Senate Political Subdivisions Committee, I am Tim Blasl, President of the North Dakota Hospital Association. I am here to testify regarding House Bill 1323 and ask that you give this bill a **Do Not Pass** recommendation.

Hospitals have concerns because it would prohibit the use of a mask in ways that could not have been intended. If a government official issues a mask mandate, it triggers subsection two and employers, such as hospitals, would be restricted from requiring patients and visitors to wear masks during an influenza outbreak. It would prohibit hospitals from requiring employees to wear appropriate personal protective equipment during the course of their duties. As you know, health care personnel have been required to wear masks in certain situations for decades before the COVID-19 pandemic occurred. This is an important part of infection control.

If this bill passed, infection control measures in health care settings would be seriously hampered. If a government-issued mask mandate is in effect, a hospital could not, for example, require a surgeon, nurse, or anyone else involved in a surgical procedure to wear a mask. Masks are not always strictly for patient safety - masks are also worn to protect the health care worker.

Healthcare workers are at risk for exposure to serious, and sometimes deadly, diseases. If they work directly with patients or handle material that could spread infection, they should take appropriate steps to reduce the chance that they will get or spread diseases. Hospitals and health care workers have a shared responsibility to prevent acquired infections and avoid causing harm to patients. This bill would take away the ability of hospitals to require staff,

visitors, and patients to wear masks if a government mask mandate has been issued. This seems not only counterproductive to whatever the mandate is trying to address, but dangerous for everyone who comes into a health care setting.

In summary, this bill is overly broad and would have too many serious, unintended consequences in the health care arena. NDHA opposes this bill and asks that you give it a Do Not Pass recommendation. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tim Blasl, President
North Dakota Hospital Association