



February 26, 2021

Dear House Business and Labor Committee:

Opposition to HB 461 “AN ACT REVISING UNION MEMBERSHIP LAWS; REQUIRING AN EMPLOYEE OF A NONPROFIT TO CONSENT TO AGENCY FEES AND OTHER PAYMENTS; DECLARING THE COLLECTION WITHOUT CONSENT OF AGENCY FEES OR OTHER PAYMENTS FROM NURSES TO BE AN UNFAIR LABOR PRACTICE;

My name is Vicky Byrd, MSN, RN. I am a Montana Registered Nurse (RN) of 32 years and the CEO of the Montana Nurses Association (MNA).

MNA has been in existence for over 109 years as a professional nurse association and incorporated under the laws of the State of Montana as a nonprofit in 1946. MNA is the recognized leader and advocate for the professional nurse in Montana. MNA is the largest state professional nurses’ association that also represents nearly 3000 collective bargaining nurses and more than 150 licensed as Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs). MNA lobbies for and represents professional nurses; promotes professional development, nursing practice, standards, health policy, and education; and provides nursing leadership in promoting high quality accessible healthcare, safety, and overall public health.

THIS BILL IS UNNECESSARY. MNA already follows the processes outlined in this bill and is a good steward of business and follows state and federal laws. The requirement that employees must affirmatively consent to deductions from their paycheck is already law in the State of Montana, just as it is in most jurisdictions in this country, and a practice that MNA follows.

Every MNA Collective Bargaining member has a choice between membership dues or agency fee (if in non-public sector), and there are NO deductions unless the nurse has given written affirmative consent provided to MNA. No one is ever forced to join a union. Nurse union members (as well as all union members) voluntarily sign a contract for membership with their union. The relationship is between the professional nurse member and their professional nurse UNION!

MNA cannot authorize a payroll deduction without this written affirmative consent and the nurse can further choose, for convenience, their method of payment, of which MNA offers many options as noted on our membership applications. The nurse has the choice. Dues or fees are **never** pulled from an RN’s paycheck without their consent and authorization. Regarding our application process, members have ample opportunity to get out of the professional nurse association, whether they have joined via their nurse union or they joined to be a part of their state’s professional nurses’ association.



I question Representative Regier, being a RN herself, what nonprofit employees/workers, and specifically nurses, is she advocating for? To MNA's knowledge, she has not been a member of MNA nor has she ever reached out to MNA for collaboration and communication regarding what would be in the best interest for the nurses across Montana.

In addition to MNA's robust collective bargaining program we are an accredited approver and provider of nursing continuing professional development programs, all operated within our association, which is supported by all of our professional nurses. To bring a bill that compromises MNA in any way or tries to attack current Montana law, for example the "Blue Eyed Nurses" bill, put in place by a well-respected nurse, the late Mary Munger, RN, in 1967, for an elite group of nurses is neither advocacy, democracy, nor inclusiveness of what is best for the professional nursing collective voice. Why is there a sudden need to make a change to the "Blue Eyed Nurses" bill, which has been working since 1967, and has created labor peace, collaboration, and communication between professional nurses and many healthcare employers across the state for decades, making positive strides addressing patient care and safe working conditions?

Of special note: MNA is accredited with distinction as an approver and a provider of nursing continuing professional development by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation. With this said, Kalispell Regional Medical Center (KRMC) is an approved provider (since 2007) under MNA as the accredited approver, as are 12 other healthcare organizations/hospitals across the state. MNA has worked with and approved KRMC and the others to plan, implement, and evaluate their professional development activities for their provider unit. KRMC renews every 3 years. This shows another side to MNA's professionalism, dedication, and advocacy that our professional nurses' union and association embodies,

This bill compromises MNAs collective bargaining arm and the 1967 "Blue Eyed Nurses" bill. The nurse who championed this bill, the late Mary Munger, RN, who passed at the age of 96 in 2019, was a public health nurse who valued the collective voice of professional nurses, not only to belong to their professional association but additionally, helped secure them the right to choose to form a union to advocate for safe working conditions and high quality patient care. MNA asks, why the attack and specificity on nurses in this bill when all state and federal laws are already being followed, further, this bill will not only affect nurses, but all workers in a non-profit organization. Please Vote NO on HB 461.

Respectfully,

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