

MNA STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF HB 702 LAWSUIT

Montana Nurses Association announces support for HB 702 suit; releases FAQ.

The Montana Nurses Association (MNA), which represents thousands of frontline Montana nurses, is announcing its support for a recent challenge to the government mandates contained in House Bill 702. Montana nurses are deeply committed to providing the highest quality safe healthcare to Montanans, which House Bill 702 compromises by placing government mandates into the middle of the provider-patient relationship.

Workplace safety and high quality healthcare go hand in hand. Unfortunately, House Bill 702 makes it difficult for healthcare providers to make adequate accommodations around any kind of vaccination in Montana. Nurses and healthcare workers do not want the exposure to themselves or their patients when unknowingly working with others who are unvaccinated. This applies not just to COVID-19, but to other potentially fatal diseases that have largely been eradicated in the United States through robust vaccination programs like pertussis and rubella. This also applies to vaccines for diseases that keep healthcare workers safe from exposure while at work, such as hepatitis, pertussis and tuberculosis.

MNA continues to support vaccine exemptions related to medical and sincere religious beliefs. Prior to House Bill 702, healthcare providers/employers made accommodations for rare cases where nurses and other healthcare workers could not receive a vaccine. House Bill 702 interferes with this safety measure and stops all that—replacing this workplace safety with an inflexible government mandate that puts healthcare workers, and more importantly, our patients at risk.

The Montana Nurses Association also released the following Q&A about the House Bill 702 lawsuit:

- Is the lawsuit just about the COVID-19 vaccine?
 - **No! House Bill 702 applies to ALL VACCINES, including those that have long eradicated deadly diseases in the United States.**
- Will the lawsuit require providers to mandate vaccines?
 - **No! Healthcare providers simply request to remove the government from the provider-patient relationship, so that workplaces can make evidence - based decisions about vaccinations to provide a safe work environment for nurses, healthcare workers, and their patients.**
- Does the lawsuit interfere with individual healthcare decisions?
 - **No! Just the opposite. House Bill 702 interferes with individual privacy and the provider-patient relationship by injecting a government mandate into healthcare decisions. The lawsuit seeks to return the freedom for healthcare providers/employers to make appropriate medical and nursing decisions based on best practice, experience, and evidence-based healthcare practices to provide a safe healthy work environment.**

Montana's Nurses stand in solidarity with their patients and other members of the healthcare community in opposing House Bill 702 and its intrusion on the freedom a trusted provider-patient relationship provides.

The Montana Nurses Association also calls on all Montanans to join the more than 85% of Montana nurses who are vaccinated, to please get vaccinated if you can against COVID-19 and wear a mask in public areas. For those of you who cannot or choose not to get vaccinated, it is especially important for you to wear a mask in our communities. These simple steps are the most effective way to prevent serious disease from the virus and to help Montana get back on track.