

GUNDERSEN HEALTH SYSTEM®

April 12, 2018

The Honorable Matt Dean, Chair
Committee on Health and Human Services Finance
Minnesota House of Representatives
401 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Tony Albright, Vice Chair
Committee on Health and Human Services Finance
Minnesota House of Representatives
407 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Erin Murphy, Ranking Member
Committee on Health and Human Services Finance
Minnesota House of Representatives
331 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: House File 3848 –Nurse License Compact

Dear Chairman Dean, Vice-Chair Albright, Ranking Member Murphy, and members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services Finance:

On behalf of Gundersen Health System, and our over 1,600 nurses including 277 licensed in Minnesota, I am pleased to strongly support House File 3848 which enrolls the State of Minnesota in the Interstate Nurse License Compact (NLC). This bill is a positive policy step forward for serving our patients and rural communities throughout southeastern Minnesota while maintaining the high quality care we provide.

Gundersen Health System is an integrated healthcare delivery organization located in throughout western Wisconsin, southeastern Minnesota, and northeastern Iowa. Our not-for-profit system includes a tertiary hospital in La Crosse, five critical access hospitals, and over 50 clinics throughout the region. With over 8,000 employees, we are the largest employer in the area providing a range of services including: clinical care, level II trauma care, medical education, and air and ground

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ambulance services. Gundersen is a recognized Healthgrades Top 50 hospital in overall care, many clinical specialty services, and patient experience. Through our strategic plan, we are committed to enriching every life through improved community health, outstanding experience of care, and decreased cost burden.

Under this bill, Minnesota will accompany nearly 30 others participating in the nurse license compact, including neighboring states. HF 3848 provides greater mobility in meeting the needs of patients and communities, particularly in rural areas. First, the NLC will promote greater efficiency and reduce administrative burden. Nurses practicing at our organization are able to seamlessly provide care for patients along the borders in our neighboring states of Iowa and Wisconsin. Second, nursing telehealth and 24/7 phone advisory services can continue and expand ensuring patients in rural areas do not have to travel significant distances for specialty care. Next, this legislation helps with recruiting and retaining a strong nursing workforce through an expedited administrative process for new hires. This is critical as we continue to experience a high demand for services throughout our system. Finally, should the worst happen, such as a natural disaster, nurses can be dispatched to aid without the need to consider additional emergency licenses. This will assist in removing an unnecessary regulatory hurdle and time consuming burden while accelerating availability of care.

This past fall, local media in southeast Minnesota highlighted the challenges and opportunities with interstate cooperation on nurse licensure. The media segment underscores the realities in providing interstate care in border communities along the Mississippi River.¹ With Minnesota currently not participating in the license compact, a Gundersen Health System nurse explains the administrative challenges as a float nurse providing care across state lines in clinics located in Minnesota.

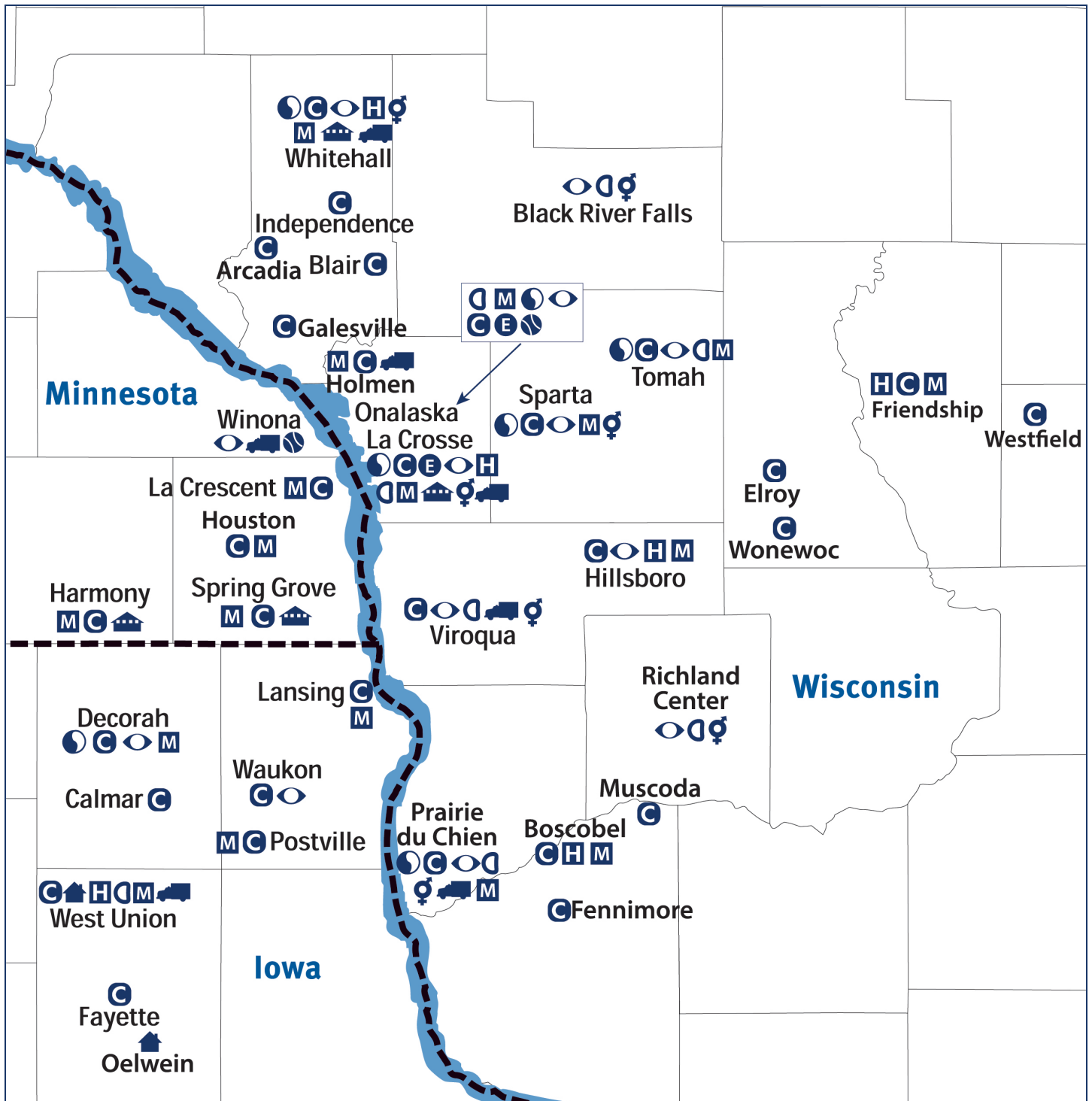
In sum, nurses are an integral part of the healthcare delivery team, and this bill would substantially improve administration of licensure for our multi-state licensed nurses. The nurse license compact maintains Minnesota's tradition as a high quality healthcare state, balancing autonomy with interstate cooperation. Again, on behalf of Gundersen Health System and our 277 Minnesota licensed nurses, we strongly support this legislation and thank you and the committee for holding this hearing today.

Sincerely,



Beth Smith-Houskamp, RN, PhD
Administrative Chief Operating Officer and Chief Nursing Officer
Gundersen Health System

¹ New bill makes it easier for nurses to treat patients in multiple states. WXOW (October 9, 2017). Retrieved from: <http://www.wxow.com/story/36556534/2017/10/09/new-bill-makes-it-easier-for-nurses-to-treat-patients-in-multiple-states>



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