



March 20th, 2024

Professional Distinction

Personal Dignity

Patient Advocacy

Chair Wiklund

MN Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Minnesota Senate Building

95 University Ave W, St Paul, MN 55103

Saint Paul, MN 55155

Chair Wiklund and committee members,

With 22,000 members, the Minnesota Nurses Association (MNA) is the leading voice for professional nursing in the State of Minnesota. As leaders in labor and health care, we are a voice for frontline hospital nurses around the state who strongly support evidence-based health policy that enables patients to access healthcare, including gender affirming healthcare. Thank you, Senator Dibble, for leading this vital work to promote more equitable healthcare policy.

Minnesota nurses firmly stand with all transgender, gender non-binary, and gender non-conforming people. We strongly oppose all state and federal legislative efforts that impair the human rights of transgender people, including those that limit transgender people's access to gender-affirming healthcare, school activities, employment, and public facilities. And we fully support creating systems to ensure more access and affordability for these lifesaving and life changing healthcare services.

Studies show that access to gender affirming care mitigates negative mental health outcomes and reduces the rates of moderate to severe depression. A study published in *Jama Network Open* by first-author Diana Tordoff found that "having access to hormones and puberty blockers for youth ages 13 to 20 was associated with a 60% lower odds of moderate to severe depression and a 73% lower odds of self-harm or suicidal thoughts compared to youth who did not receive these medications over a 12-month period." This is a huge difference in the lives of Minnesotans and many more studies show additional benefits for providing access to gender affirming care.

Knowing that access to gender affirming care can greatly improve lives and save lives, it's easy to see that everyone should have access to affordable and accessible gender affirming healthcare. SF 2209 is an important step towards this. Now is the time for Minnesota to remove these barriers to care and ensure that we continue to be a leader in providing equitable healthcare, access, and support for those in need. For the health, safety, and economic well-being of patients across the state, we urge you to support SF 2209.

Thank you,

Shannon M. Cunningham

Director of Governmental and Community Relations

Minnesota Nurses Association

345 Randolph Avenue
Suite 200

St. Paul, MN 55102

Tel: 651.414.2800

800.536.4662

Fax: 651.695.7000

Email: mnnurses@mnnurses.org

Web: www.mnnurses.org



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