



MINNESOTA NURSES ASSOCIATION
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Minnesota Senate
Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Ave. W.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Members of the Minnesota Senate,

On behalf of the Minnesota Nurses Association (MNA) and the nurses and healthcare professionals we represent across the state, **we respectfully urge you to vote NO on SF 2300**. This legislation would weaken Minnesota's Earned Sick and Safe Time (ESST) law, roll back essential protection and undermine the rights of every worker across our great state.

At MNA, we believe that **earned sick and safe time is not a privilege — it is a basic human right**. No worker should have to choose between their health and their paycheck, especially those on the frontlines of public health. During the COVID-19 pandemic, nurses were punished for getting sick, denied pay after workplace exposures, and pressured to return before they were well. That experience revealed what we already knew: **workplace protections cannot be left to employers' discretion**. A handful of benevolent employers cannot make up for the lack of enforceable standards for all.

Before ESST, **nurses were subjected to harsh attendance or “call-out” policies**. These systems punished workers for using sick time, even when they were ill or caring for family. One of the worst offenders was Allina Health; good nurses, experienced, dedicated professionals, were pushed through disciplinary processes simply for calling out sick more than their Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) allowed. For example, a nurse working full-time could only have 4 call outs every six months otherwise, they would face disciplinary action. **These arbitrary limits created impossible choices, especially for women, who make up most of the nursing workforce, who are often primary caregivers at home and are exposed to illness daily.**

Allina isn't the only healthcare system with these attendance policies. The universal attitude was that nurses exposed to illness on the job were expected to either work sick, go unpaid, or risk disciplinary action because the hospitals refused to staff accordingly. These practices didn't just demoralize the nurses; they drove nurses away from the bedside at a time when our healthcare system could not afford it. **It wasn't until the 2024 ESST improvements took effect that these practices became illegal**. If SF 2300 passes and creates an unprotected bucket of sick time, these harmful policies could once again be reinstated.

SF 2300 would dismantle Minnesota's progress by dividing sick time into two separate categories: one protected and one unprotected, making it vulnerable to retaliation, and legally ambiguous. This two-bucket approach creates confusion, weakens accountability, and **betrays the very purpose of ESST**: to ensure workers can care for themselves or their loved ones without risking their job, income, or health.

As nurses, we see every day what happens when people are forced to work while sick. Illness spreads. Patients and coworkers suffer. Our healthcare system, already stretched thin, bears the cost. **ESST is a public health safeguard as much as it is a labor standard.** As you consider your vote, we want to emphasize several concerns:

- Most of the workplaces we represent already use a traditional two-bucket structure for benefit time: one vacation and one sick time.
- **SF 2300 would force a return for our members to a three-bucket system:** protected sick time, unprotected sick time, and vacation time — a structure that is more confusing for workers and exposes them to manipulation by bad employers, including retaliation for using sick time.
- Many nurses work 10- or 12-hour shifts and when they need to use unplanned ESST, hospitals often require them to take the entire shift off – even when it is a brief childcare emergency. **This practice means nurses burn through their limited protected hours** more quickly than a standard 8-hour shift worker. This creates an unequal and unfair outcome based solely on shift length.
- Workers should not have to guess which type of sick leave they're using or worry about whether they'll **face discipline for taking it.**
- **All earned sick time should be protected, full stop.** Health protections shouldn't expire after a set number of hours.
- This bill undermines the respect and dignity every worker deserves. ESST is more than policy, it reflects a **core belief that workers can be trusted to make the right decisions for their own health** and their families. Weakening it sends the message that some workers, or some hours, matter less.

While some business groups have labeled ESST as "confusing" or "burdensome," we believe **a single, consistent statewide standard is the clearest, fairest, and most business-friendly solution.** Creating exemptions and loopholes, as SF 2300 proposes, will lead to even more inconsistency, legal uncertainty, and enforcement challenges. **Minnesota has a proud tradition of policies that balance economic strength with worker protections.** SF 2300 moves us away from that tradition. It does not reflect the values of health, fairness, and dignity that Minnesotans hold dear.

While we have engaged and will continue to engage with the author and stakeholders about our concerns with the legislation if provided with the opportunity, **we cannot support any language that will move us backwards** or make it harder for nurses to remain at the bedside, especially at a time when we cannot afford to lose a single one. Nurses are the backbone of our healthcare system and carried our communities through the pandemic. Despite this, very little has been done to increase the retention of nurses at the bedside through the Legislature beyond the broader pro-worker reforms passed in 2023-24 that also benefited our members.

Nurses will not stand by silently while this essential protection is weakened. **We urge you to stand with Minnesota's workers, families, and the health of our communities by voting no on SF 2300.**

Sincerely,



Chris Rubesch, RN
President, Minnesota Nurses Association