

HOUSE BILL NO. 1175

Introduced by

Representatives Howe, Bosch, Devlin, Lefor, Mock, Stemen

Senators Burckhard, Klein, Bell

1 A BILL for an Act to create and enact a new chapter to title 32 of the North Dakota Century
2 Code, relating to business immunity from COVID-19 liability claims; to provide for retroactive
3 application; and to declare an emergency.

4 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

5 **SECTION 1.** A new chapter to title 32 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and
6 enacted as follows:

7 **Definitions.**

8 As used in this chapter:

9 1. "COVID-19" means:

10 a. Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 identified as SARS-CoV-2 and
11 any mutation or viral fragments of SARS-Cov-2; and

12 b. Any disease or condition caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome
13 coronavirus 2 identified as SARS-CoV-2.

14 2. "Disinfecting or cleaning supplies" includes hand sanitizers, disinfectants, disinfecting
15 sprays, and disinfecting wipes.

16 3. "Health care facility" means any facility in which health care services are provided and
17 includes a hospital, special care unit, skilled nursing facility, intermediate care facility,
18 basic care facility, assisted living facility, ambulatory surgical center, freestanding
19 emergency department, rural primary care hospital, critical access hospital, inpatient
20 hospice facility, including a clinic not located on a hospital's primary campus, health
21 maintenance organization, home health agency, any field hospital, modular
22 field-treatment facility, or other alternative care facility designated by the state
23 department of health for temporary use related to the COVID-19 state of emergency,
24 and a diagnostic, examination, treatment, imaging, or rehabilitation center.

- 1 4. "Health care provider" means an individual or entity licensed, certified, or otherwise
2 authorized to provide health care services in this state whether paid or unpaid. The
3 term includes:
- 4 a. The employer or agent of a health care provider that provides or arranges a
5 health care service;
- 6 b. A person engaged in telemedicine or telehealth; and
- 7 c. A volunteer or military member who is approved by or works under the direction
8 of the state department of health and who provides health care services in
9 response to the COVID-19 state of emergency.
- 10 5. "Intentional" means when engaging in the conduct, it is the person's purpose to do so.
- 11 6. "Personal protective equipment" means equipment worn to prevent or minimize
12 exposure to hazards that cause injuries or illnesses.
- 13 7. "Premises" means any real property, any appurtenant building or structure, and any
14 vehicle serving a residential, agricultural, commercial, industrial, educational, religious,
15 governmental, cultural, charitable, or health care purpose.
- 16 8. "Qualified product" means:
- 17 a. Personal protective equipment used to protect the wearer from COVID-19 or to
18 prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- 19 b. A medical device or equipment used to treat COVID-19, including a medical
20 device or equipment used or modified for an unapproved use to treat COVID-19
21 or to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- 22 c. A medical device or equipment used outside its normal use to treat COVID-19 or
23 to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- 24 d. Medication or treatment used to treat or prevent COVID-19, including medication
25 or treatment prescribed or dispensed for off-label use to treat or prevent
26 COVID-19.
- 27 e. A test to diagnose or determine immunity to COVID-19.
- 28 9. "Reckless" means conduct engaged in a conscious and clearly unjustifiable disregard
29 of a substantial likelihood of the existence of the relevant facts or risks, such disregard
30 involving a gross deviation from acceptable standards of conduct.

1 10. "Unapproved" means not authorized, accredited, or certified by a federal or state
2 agency for any other use, purpose, or design.

3 11. "Willful" means the conduct is engaged in intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly.

4 **Actual injury requirement in civil actions alleging COVID-19 exposure.**

5 A person may not bring or maintain a civil action alleging exposure or potential exposure to
6 COVID-19 unless the civil action involves an act intended to cause harm or an act that
7 constitutes actual malice.

8 **Premises owner's duty of care - Limited liability.**

9 A person that possesses, owns, or is in control of premises, including a tenant, lessee, or
10 occupant of a premises, which directly or indirectly invites or permits an individual onto the
11 premises is immune from civil liability for any act or omission resulting in damage or injury
12 sustained from the individual's exposure to COVID-19, unless the person that possesses, owns,
13 or is in control of the premises:

14 1. Exposes the individual to COVID-19 through an act that constitutes actual malice; or

15 2. Intentionally exposes the individual to COVID-19 with the intent to cause harm.

16 **Safe harbor for compliance with statutes, regulations, or executive orders.**

17 A person is immune from civil liability for an act or omission resulting in damage or injury
18 sustained from exposure or potential exposure to COVID-19 if the act or omission was in
19 substantial compliance or was consistent with a federal or state statute, regulation, or order
20 related to COVID-19 which was applicable to the person or activity at issue at the time of the
21 alleged exposure or potential exposure.

22 **Liability of health care providers and health care facilities.**

23 1. A health care provider or health care facility is immune from civil liability for any act or
24 omission in response to COVID-19 that causes or contributes, directly or indirectly, to
25 the death or injury of an individual. The immunity provided under this subsection
26 includes:

27 a. Injury or death resulting from screening, assessing, diagnosing, caring for,
28 triaging, or treating an individual with a suspected or confirmed case of
29 COVID-19.

30 b. Prescribing, administering, or dispensing a pharmaceutical for off-label use to
31 treat or prevent a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.

1 c. An act or omission while providing a health care service to an individual unrelated
2 to COVID-19 if the act or omission supports the state's response to COVID-19,
3 including:

4 (1) Delaying or canceling a nonurgent or elective dental, medical, or surgical
5 procedure, or altering the diagnosis or treatment of an individual.

6 (2) Diagnosing or treating an individual outside the normal scope of a health
7 care provider's license or practice.

8 (3) Using a medical device, treatment, or equipment outside its normal use for
9 the provision of health care, including using or modifying a medical device,
10 treatment, or equipment for an unapproved use.

11 (4) Conducting a test or providing treatment to an individual outside the
12 premises of a health care facility.

13 (5) An act or omission undertaken by a health care provider or a health care
14 facility because of a lack of staff, facility, medical device, treatment,
15 equipment, or other resource, attributable to COVID-19 which renders the
16 health care provider or health care facility unable to provide the level or
17 manner of care to an individual which otherwise would have been required
18 in the absence of COVID-19.

19 (6) An act or omission undertaken by a health care provider or a health care
20 facility relating to use or nonuse of personal protective equipment.

21 (7) An act or omission undertaken by a health care provider or a health care
22 facility relating to the administration, delivery, distribution, allocation,
23 prioritization, or dispensing of scarce resources among individuals such as
24 medical devices, treatment, and equipment when those acts or omissions
25 were intended to support the state's response to the COVID-19 state of
26 emergency.

27 2. The immunity provided under subsection 1 does not apply to an act or omission that
28 constitutes:

29 a. Willful and wanton misconduct;

30 b. Reckless infliction of harm; or

31 c. Intentional infliction of harm.

1 **Supplies, equipment, and products designed, manufactured, labeled, sold,**
2 **distributed, and donated in response to COVID-19.**

3 1. A person that designs, manufactures, labels, sells, distributes, or donates disinfecting
4 or cleaning supplies, personal protective equipment, or a qualified product in response
5 to COVID-19 is immune from civil liability for any personal injury, death, or property
6 damage caused by or resulting from the design, manufacturing, labeling, selling,
7 distributing, or donating of the disinfecting or cleaning supplies, personal protective
8 equipment, or a qualified product.

9 2. A person that designs, manufactures, labels, sells, distributes, or donates disinfecting
10 or cleaning supplies, personal protective equipment, or a qualified product in response
11 to COVID-19 is immune from civil liability for any personal injury, death, or property
12 damage caused by or resulting from a failure to provide proper instruction or sufficient
13 warning.

14 3. The immunity provided under subsections 1 and 2 does not apply:

15 a. To a person that designs, manufactures, labels, sells, distributes, or donates
16 disinfecting or cleaning supplies, personal protective equipment, or a qualified
17 product:

18 (1) With actual knowledge of a defect in the disinfecting or cleaning supplies,
19 personal protective equipment, or a qualified product when put to the use for
20 which the disinfecting or cleaning supplies, personal protective equipment,
21 or a qualified product was designed, manufactured, sold, distributed, or
22 donated; and

23 (2) If the person recklessly disregarded a substantial and unnecessary risk the
24 disinfecting or cleaning supplies, personal protective equipment, or a
25 qualified product would cause serious personal injury, death, or serious
26 property damage; or

27 b. If the person that designs, manufactures, labels, sells, distributes, or donates
28 disinfecting or cleaning supplies, personal protective equipment, or a qualified
29 product acts with actual malice.

30 **Construction.**

31 This chapter may not be construed to:

- 1 1. Create, recognize, or ratify a liability claim or cause of action.
- 2 2. Eliminate or satisfy a required element of a liability claim or cause of action.
- 3 3. Amend, repeal, affect, or supersede any other immunity protection that may apply
- 4 under state or federal law.

5 **SECTION 2. RETROACTIVE APPLICATION.** This Act applies retroactively to January 1,
6 2020.

7 **SECTION 3. EMERGENCY.** This Act is declared to be an emergency measure.