In 2030, South Dakota will be the only Midwestern state still suffering from a shortage of Registered Nurses (RNs). As the number of RNs leaving the workforce every year continues to grow, the state education system has yet to find a sufficient solution to meet its increasing need. A recent study shows South Dakota needing an additional 2,000 RNs, a 14% increase in the current workforce, to meet the projected demand.

Compounding the problem is the fact that nursing schools are struggling to expand the capacity to meet rising demand of nursing care. In 2018, South Dakota had 401 empty seats in nursing school classrooms that could have been filled by over 500 qualified applicants. This discrepancy can be attributed to the 7 unfilled part-time and 17 unfilled full-time faculty positions in associate and baccalaureate programs; this number jumped by over 200% from 2017 to 2018.

South Dakota Association of Healthcare Organizations (SDAHO) is working with the board of regents, universities, schools, and policy makers to bring attention to this healthcare concern. SDAHO is leveraging its resources to shape legislation, identify strategies, and form collaborations to address the shortage.