

March 8, 2021

Madam Chair Lee and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee:

My name is Dr. Joe Carlson and I practice at the Bone & Joint Center as an Orthopedic Surgeon, specializing in knee and shoulder surgery. I also practice in Turtle Lake and believe House Bill 1465 would be of significant benefit for patients in that region of North Dakota.

The real issue that I see in Turtle Lake is the number of patients that actually see a Sanford physician first, then ultimately wind up becoming a patient of mine. Invariably they talk about the fact that since they had Sanford insurance, they felt compelled to see a Sanford doctor to receive treatment. While this might seem appropriate in most circumstances, patients should not be forced into this situation, if it doesn't make sense either from a treatment or logistical standpoint.

Patient choice, or any willing provider bills have been passed in multiple states. I think this bill is particularly important in our area as we have a health insurance plan that is named, unfortunately but purposely I suspect, almost identical to a healthcare provider. As you are aware this leads to an innate and I suspect purposeful confusion. House Bill 1465, in my opinion, would not only serve to save patients money in the long run but would also serve as basically Ground Zero, sending patients a message that they can see any physician that is willing to provide them care – under the same terms, conditions and price as any other provider – whether or not they are part of a narrow network. This is true patient choice. Patients we (and legislators) serve.

I respectfully request the Committee recommend a DO PASS on House Bill 1465.