



**Testimony in Support
Senate Bill No. 2231
House Human Services Committee
March 11, 2025**

Chairman Ruby, Vice Chair Frelich and honorable members of the House Human Services Committee, my name is Mara Jiran and I am the CEO of Spectra Health, a community health center with clinics in Grand Forks and Larimore, ND. I join my health center colleagues today in thanking you for your time and to testify in support of SB 2231.

For over twenty years, Spectra Health has been committed to providing comprehensive medical, dental, behavioral health, addiction services, optometry, social services, and chiropractic care. In 2024 alone, we supported almost 6,000 (5,859) patients through 20,500 visits. A staggering 78% of our patients qualify for traditional Medicaid, Expanded Medicaid, or are uninsured. We exist to fill gaps, champion high-quality integration in primary care and to ensure all North Dakotans have access to care regardless of their ability to pay.

Spectra Health has been offering dental services in the northeast region of North Dakota for over eighteen years. Particularly in the most recent years, demand for primary care dental services has skyrocketed. Spectra, along with other health centers, are some of the only places for Medicaid, Medicaid Expansion and those who are uninsured- all of whom by the way, have teeth- to receive primary dental care.

Every week, hundreds of individuals attempt to schedule dental visits at our clinic. Spectra has had to implement strategic scheduling and staffing strategies however we are still unable to currently meet the need. We see on a daily basis that delaying oral health services results in expensive emergency room care and advanced oral surgeries that could have been prevented. But when there is literally nowhere else for people to go, we as communities and individuals end up paying the most amount of money for the least effective interventions.

As already mentioned, nearly 80% of our patient population qualify for Medicaid or Medicaid Expansion coverage. They are already our patients and receiving services in our clinic. However, we are in an untenable situation. We are facing the reality that these dental services for expansion patients come with no reimbursement mechanism. If Spectra Health did not have to absorb so much uncompensated dental care costs, we could hire more dental staff which would allow us to see more patients. This is ultimately our goal-to improve and expand access to cost-effective, high quality dental primary care services. Over the decades of time community health centers have been providing care to North Dakotans, we have shown our ability to ultimately save the ND Medicaid program valuable dollars through our comprehensive approach to primary care.

The inclusion of dental services within Medicaid Expansion is the next chapter in the success story of the collaborative power of community health centers, ND Medicaid and this legislative body.

To this end, I respectfully urge you to consider the inclusion of dental services within Medicaid Expansion as it would significantly improve access to care while also improving overall health outcomes for thousands of North Dakotans.

Thank you for your consideration,

Mara Jiran, CEO
Spectra Health