

Chair Lee and Members of the Committee -

Good Morning - my name is Dylan Wheeler, Head of Government Affairs with Sanford Health Plan. Today, speaking in a neutral capacity on HB1322. On the front end, we want to express our strong support for the balance billing protections for members found on Page 1, lines 28-30 and Page 2, lines 1-3. Through the Federal No Surprises Act – patients and members are protected from surprise medical bills of certain providers and also air ambulance charges. However, a void in the No Surprises Act is that there is no protection for balance bills from ground ambulance providers. To my knowledge, we currently do not have big issues with ground ambulance provider's balance billing in North Dakota; however, codifying such a consumer protection is good policy.

The initial version of this bill called for a direct reimbursement rate for all ambulance services at 400% of Medicare, which was a very substantial increase in the market. We voiced concern around that number and setting such an attachment point in statute. By comparison, currently the Medicaid Expansion programs caps reimbursement for providers at 145% of Medicare. The amendment that now requires 250% of Medicare is closer to the current market rate.

I would like to highlight that this bill will have a financial effect on the NDPERS health plan. During the House discussion, we worked with NDPERS to raise this point but was informed a fiscal note would not be applied because Employee Benefits did not take jurisdiction. We would encourage the committee to examine the possibility of appropriating funds to support this increase to the NDPERS health plan. To be clear, I am not suggesting that this bill go through the NDPERS 2 year pilot period – just an appropriations issue.

I appreciate the committee's time and please let me know if you have any questions.

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