

March 10, 2025

Regarding: HB 1481

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

On behalf of the North Dakota Dental Association, our Board of Trustees, over 400 member dentists, and over 500,000 North Dakotans we treat; I would humbly ask for your support of our NDDA DLR Bill HB 1481. As your clinically trained and licensed dental professionals in our state, we are responsible for the oral health treatment and outcomes of the citizens across our state. HB 1481 is one of many initiatives we take up on behalf of our patients to make dental care more affordable, accessible and valuable.

Oral health is a vital component of overall health and often overlooked or brushed aside by our society. There are many barriers to care that our patients(your constituents) face and the number one identified barrier is "cost." As an industry and profession, we take our Hippocratic oath to serve the members of our community, and a foundational component of that oath is provision and access to our dental care services. Along with providing an adequate network of providers for our public assistance system(Medicaid), for our underserved communities, we also are focused on affordability and value for consumers in the private market. With "cost" being the number one concern and barrier for consumers, HB 1481 works directly to drive value and utilization into the insurance products that many of our patients have, but often struggle to understand and utilize.

Dental Insurance has been cumbersome and problematic(for decades) for not only us as providers(the sophisticated entities in our space), but more importantly and problematically our patients. Dental is different. We embrace that, understand that, but also work hard to educate and empower our patients to engage and interact with a system that is nuanced, different and separated from Major Medical Systems. Our distinction brings you the personalized service, small town community and main street business delivery of care, but also carry's the burden that is compliance with today's dental insurance industry and coverage.

Our members across the state continue to do what they feel is best for North Dakota and are focused on that, taking care of North Dakota. HB 1481 is one small step in the right direction. Just as we challenge the dental insurance to do better and be better, we constantly challenge ourselves and our members to do better and be better by our fellow neighbors. There is always more to do and always more that can be done. I hope you come visit one of our future Mission of Mercy's where we transform a public site into a free dental clinic treating over a 1,000 North Dakotans across two days or come to our NDDA Medicaid Dental Medicaid Advisory Workgroup Meetings to join in the work being done to drive access for our underserved communities in our state.

We stand with you, alongside you, ready to treat, take care of and stand up for the oral health needs of the citizens of our state. Please stand with us on HB 1481.

Respectfully,



Dr. Walter Samuel
President North Dakota Dental Association