



Testimony
Bill: HB #1328
House Human Services Committee
January 23, 2021

Chairman Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee, my name is Michael Curtis. I serve as the Executive Director of the McKenzie County Healthcare Systems, Inc. (MCHS) in Watford City, North Dakota and am currently in the process of transitioning into the CEO role. I am writing this testimony in support of HB #1328.

Several years ago our healthcare system began receiving Medical Necessity denials from multiple insurance carriers for Vitamin D tests. CMS determined Vitamin D was not considered a “screening” test, and “fatigue,” a common reason it was ordered, was also not a covered diagnosis. Unfortunately insurance carriers often mirror their medical necessity lists on CMS’. Even after distributing the updated information to providers regarding the limited medical necessity list, in the two year period from 2019 to 2020 we still ended up writing-off 37 patient tests, or approximately \$8,000. Of the 37 patient tests, 28 patients had commercial insurance.

When the pandemic took hold substantial effort went into identifying ways to prevent and treat Covid-19. Though a multitude of areas were studied one that kept coming up was the role of Vitamin D. Even on a local level it was observed that a combination treatment of vitamins (including Vitamin D) and medication had beneficial effects on outcomes (severity) due to Covid-19 infection. It was observed that the combination helped more than any one of the supplements or medications individually. Unfortunately we ended up using a standard dose of Vitamin D in these treatments because we rarely had the patient’s serum Vitamin D level available.

Our system supports a community outreach program called “Birthday Labs.” This program offers multiple screening laboratory tests to the community on an annual basis at highly discounted cash-based prices. Several months ago we added Vitamin D as an optional test through this outreach program to help improve access. Though we believe this effort has helped, it has not removed the barrier to access for Vitamin D testing. Therefore I support HB #1328 in an effort to further reduce this barrier to care.

Thank you for your consideration.

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