

Good afternoon Chairman Lee and esteemed members of the Senate Human Service Committee. It is my pleasure to introduce HB 1151 for your consideration. There will be a number of speakers to follow that will provide expert testimony and will answer all your questions. I do want to give you a brief explanation of what we are attempting to do with this bill.

As many of you will recall, in the 2019 session, the North Dakota legislature established statutory “telemedicine” guidelines [through Senate Bill 2094] in the medical practices act for licensed physicians in the state but did not provide those same guidelines to dentists. HB1151 takes those same provisions and applies them to the dental practice act.

The bill **ensures patient safety** while expanding access to quality oral health care.

- Holds dentists providing virtual care to patients to the same high standard of care as for traditional in-person office visits.
- Imposes responsibilities on dentists to ensure that patients are informed and treated appropriately throughout the remote telehealth encounter.

The bill **provides statutory certainty for state licensed dentists** who choose to treat patients using remote technologies as it clearly states the “rules of the road.”

The bill seeks to have **the same rule for telehealth patient care provided by North Dakota dentists and physicians.**

The bill is important for several reasons:

- **Expands access to quality, affordable oral health care for citizens in our state**

We have known for years many citizens of our great state struggle to access quality dental care due to the rural nature of our state.

Given the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, access to affordable, quality oral care without having to leave one’s home is essential to protecting North Dakotans’ health.

This bill gives licensed dentists in the state the comfort that they aren’t risking their licenses when appropriately treating patient through remote technologies

Finally, recent experience during the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us many lessons, not the least of which is that our health care system needs to be flexible and resilient. HB1151 will help increase its flexibility to the benefit of patients across the state as we

allow the Dental profession the same opportunities, we provided other medical professionals last session.

Chairman Lee and committee members, I appreciate the opportunity to introduce this bill to the Senate Human Service Committee. I would be happy to try answer any questions, but I feel the committee would be much better served by saving any questions for the experts who will follow me. Thank you.