

House Bill 1029
North Dakota House of Representatives
Human Services Committee
Rep. Gretchen Dobervich
January 9, 2023 2:15 pm

Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Human Services Committee my name is Representative Gretchen Dobervich. I represent District 11 in South Central Fargo. I come before you with HB 1029, a bill passed out of the Legislative Interim Committee on Health Care, related to study of a community health workers program.

HB 1029 authorizes the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services to develop, implement, and reimburse a community health worker program. It directs the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services to establish certification and recertification for community health workers and determine the education and experience required to be certified as a community health worker in North Dakota.

HB 1029 requires North Dakota Medicaid to cover services performed by a community health worker under a care plan written by a licensed medical professional. Services that can be provided under HB 1029 are limited to care coordination, health system navigation, resource coordination, health promotion and coaching and health education. Some of these services are already billable to existing programs under North Dakota Medicaid.

Included in the list of services that cannot be billed for is transportation, which can be a barrier to care in rural areas. Interpretation services are also not included. While larger communities in North Dakota have options for professional interpreter services, these may not be available in all areas of the state and maybe needed specific to medical and health promotion and understanding a plan of care. Socialization is also not included, but may be included in a plan of care for a person with chronic illness or a mental health diagnosis who does not qualify for services under another provider, have access to another provider of these services, or does not have unpaid caregivers who can provide the service.

HB 1029 does not authorize a community health worker to practice within the scope of practice of another regulated profession, such as nursing, medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, or psychology. Yet there are some services such as visual oral cancer screenings that are performed by CHWs in several states that do not require any medical equipment, no invasive procedures, and has been successful in getting patients to their medical providers for sooner, less costly oral cancer care and treatment. In several states CHWs are trained and certified to perform filament tests on the feet of patients with diabetes. This test is used to test for nerve damage related to diabetes. In one case a patient had a thumb tack that had been in their foot for some time that they did not feel as a result of nerve damage. The CHW was visiting and discovered it when conducting the filament test and was able to get the patient to medical care immediately and