

Testimony Prepared for the
House Human Services Committee
March 1, 2023
By Genny Dienstmann ND Association of Counties



RE: Senate Bill 2153

Chair Weisz and House Human Services Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 2153. I am Genny Dienstmann with the ND Association of Counties. I also served as a member of the ND Health Council from 2013 through 2021 and was Chair of the ND Health Council from November 2017 through November 2020.

During my tenure on the ND Health Council, we were responsible for creating and/or passing a variety of administrative rules including medical marijuana, TENORM and creating/defining core functions of a public health unit. The Health Council worked directly with the ND Department Health staff and Local Public Health administrators to create these core functions as there was no clear definition in administrative rules or state statute that provided this definition. There was full support from all parties involved and public input was requested. We made certain no additional responsibilities would be included in these core functions so that existing health units would meet all requirements once passed.

These core functions were brought to the full Health Council for review and approval, which passed unanimously. They were then forwarded to the ND Attorney General's Office for legal review and approval to be included in the Administrative Rules under the Department of Health. Unfortunately, I, along with many others who worked on these core functions, were not aware they weren't approved in Administrative Rules in 2017.

During the 2021 legislative session, it was brought to my attention there was no clear definition of core functions of a public health unit. After inquiring with the ND Department of Health and ND Attorney General's Office, I was informed the rules exceeded the Department of Health's authority and therefore were not approved back in 2017.

Chair Weisz and committee members, I strongly support SB 2153 as written as it affirms what the ND Health Council, along with our health partners, intended to do in 2017 when defining the core functions for a public health unit.