

North Dakota House Human Services Committee
Senate Bill (SB) 2155
Wednesday, March 15, 2023

Chair Weisz, Vice Chair Ruby, and Members of the Committee, I am Patrick Gulbranson, Chief Executive Officer of Family HealthCare based in Fargo, North Dakota and urge you to vote yes for SB 2155. I am pleased to present testimony in support of SB 2155.

Family HealthCare's mission is to provide high quality healthcare for every person. Family HealthCare is a private, non-profit, federally qualified health center (FQHC) that has been operating in the community for over 30 years. As an FQHC, Family HealthCare is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, of which a majority of members are patients of Family HealthCare. Annually, Family HealthCare provides comprehensive primary care, including medical, dental, behavioral health, pharmacy, optometry, lifestyle medicine, and other services, to approximately 15,000 unique patients including over 52,000 visits. A large portion of our patients have incomes at or below the 200% Federal Poverty Level, and reside in Cass and Barnes Counties, North Dakota, and Clay County, Minnesota. Nearly 25% of our patients are uninsured, approximately 53% of our patients have Medicaid, and 1 in 4 of our patients are best served in a language other than English.

The need for access to comprehensive primary care continues to rise in our community. In particular, the need for access to dental services continues to grow in our service area and Family HealthCare is committed to expanding our capacity to serve more dental patients. Currently, we simply cannot expand our dental services fast enough; additional funding would assist us in striving to meet this need for more access.

Family HealthCare could utilize the additional funding from SB 2155 to increase our capacity of serving more dental patients in our clinics and Mobile Clinic Unit, a 40-foot truck unit with 2 dental operatories/medical exam rooms, by increasing the number of dental operatories and hiring additional staff. Our dental clinics serve over 7,100 patients and in 2022, the Mobile Clinic Unit provided 848 encounters comprising of 182 dental visits, 628 immunizations, 23 physical exams, and 15 optometry exams to patients who would likely not receive care elsewhere. The additional funding could assist us in having the Mobile Clinic Unit operational more days of the year. The demand for our Mobile Clinic Unit to provide services in our community at schools, senior living facilities, social service organizations, our Homeless Health Services clinic, and other locations far exceeds our current ability to due to limited staffing and financial resources. The additional investment in health centers would prevent more unnecessary emergency room visits and avoidable hospitalizations in our communities, creating shared savings across the healthcare continuum.

Thank you for allowing me to bring this testimony before you today and I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,
Patrick Gulbranson
Chief Executive Officer, Family HealthCare