

Testimony
Engrossed House Bill No. 1447
Senate Human Services Committee
Senator Judy Lee, Chairman
March 13, 2023

Chairman Weisz, and members of the Senate Human Services Committee, I am Pamela Sagness, Behavioral Health Executive Director with the Department of Health and Human Services. I appear before you today to provide information relating to Engrossed House Bill 1447.

On January 6, 2023 Governor Burgum, through executive order, created the Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee as recommended by the North Dakota Attorney General's Office after Attorney General Drew Wrigley signed the settlement agreements.

The committee consists of six voting members appointed and a non-voting chairperson designated by the governor, with equal representation from the state and local governments.

The following individuals were recommended and appointed as members by both the Governor's Office and Attorney General's Office:

- Pamela Sagness, director of the Behavioral Health Division in the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services;
- Col. Brandon Solberg, Superintendent of the North Dakota Highway Patrol;
- Jonathan Holth, managing director, Office of Recovery Reinvented;
- Aaron Birst, executive director, North Dakota Association of Counties;
- Mary Korsmo, executive director, North Dakota State Association of City and County Health Officials;

- Stephanie Dassinger Engebretson, deputy director and staff attorney, North Dakota League of Cities.
- Lt. Governor Tammy Miller, Chair

The first meeting of the Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee was held February 9, 2023. The key agenda items included a briefing on the settlements including allowable uses, discussion of legislative action related to opioids, and development of an engagement strategy to include public listening sessions to provide communities, businesses, family members, or individuals an opportunity to share with the committee the impact of the opioid epidemic. The key action of the committee was to decide that listening sessions would be held this spring including in person and virtual options with to goal to hear from individuals, family members, community members, providers, and businesses from across the state.

The opioid settlement funds are designed to provide treatment, prevention, education, and support directly to individuals. The Department of Human Services' Behavioral Health Division has received several federal grants over the past decade specifically related to addressing opioid addiction and preventing opioid overdose. We have experience administering many of the programs identified as allowable uses in the settlement. We appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with the Legislature, Governor's Office, and Office of the Attorney General in order to ensure funds are distributed efficiently to have maximum impact and to avoid duplication of effort.

This concludes my testimony. I would be happy to try to answer any questions. Thank you.