

Senate Bill 2227

Senator Judy Lee

SB 2227 updates and restores the responsibilities and membership of the State Health Council. It has, in recent years, not been as engaged in the responsibilities which had long been assigned to them, such as collaborating with various health officials and providers on developing rules which would have input from diverse stakeholders to assure that rules would be effective and workable.

The advisory role has been diminished to the point that all that remained was approving the recipients of loan repayment for health professionals. That led to a discussion in the Health Council of dissolving, because they no longer had much to do.

A small group of individuals from various health professions, some of whom had been are currently on the Health Council, met legislators to discuss the future of the Health Council. The consensus was that it was worth the effort to try to restore the activities of the Health Council and provide support for the State Health Officer in moving forward with the functions necessary for the Health Division. Meetings were held to plan and prepare the recommendations which you see in the bill before you.

Section 1 states the purpose of the Health Council and changes the membership to statutory categories, rather than appointed positions. It was designed to be similar to the Medical School Advisory Council which is very engaged in communications with the dean, faculty, and staff to provide input from the citizen members and support for their programs.

You will see on page 2 the list of members representing tribal health, research universities, public health, medical and long term care facilities, recommended by groups which represent them.

Reimbursement is spelled out in #6 on page 3.

Section 2 lists the powers and duties, which have been updated to say “collaborate and support”, rather than “establish and enforce”. They will not have and have not had enforcement authority. They can hear matters dealing with licenses of hospitals, as well as construction. It also describes its role in advising the Governor, DHHS, legislative assembly, and citizens about important issues.

The informal group worked very collaboratively on updating this statute so that it is workable in today’s world and will be a positive partner for the State Health Officer in leading the public health efforts in ND.

I support SB 2227 as an important update for an existing entity to provide support and information for the Division of Health, other public officials, and the citizens of North Dakota. I encourage your support, too.