



Statement of Michael Byrne on behalf of UStiA
North Dakota Senate
Industry and Business Committee
Public Hearing
January 25, 2023

Committee Members—

My name is Michael Byrne and I represent the United States Travel Insurance Association (UStiA). The UStiA’s members include insurance carriers, third-party administrators, insurance agencies, and related businesses involved in the development, administration, and marketing of travel insurance and travel assistance products.

Travel insurance is a bit different from other lines of insurance, like homeowners or auto insurance. It’s a so-called “limited line” of insurance that protects against certain kinds of losses while traveling—so you’re covered if you lose your luggage, or your trip gets cancelled, or you get sick while traveling. It’s generally offered with non-insurance services like translation services, lost passport assistance, and related services.

Thank you for bringing SB 2173 before the Committee today. This legislation is important because it creates a framework specifically for the regulation of travel insurance—which is generally

subject to the insurance laws and regulations just like any other line of insurance coverage. Existing North Dakota statutes specifically address licensing and registration of travel insurance agents and travel retailers, in line with a model law adopted by the National Council of Insurance Legislators (NCOIL). SB 2173 builds on that licensing framework by codifying requirements for the sale of travel insurance, consistent with established industry practice and nearly identical model acts adopted by NCOIL and the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC).

Many of the issues addressed in the Model Act are practices and concepts that have been widely accepted by regulators for years. The Model codifies those practices and concepts, specifically clarifying them for travel insurance so that regulators and the industry are on the same page. Going forward, the hope is that there will be no confusion as to what is permitted and required under the law.

Adoption of the Model Act at NCOIL and NAIC included a comprehensive review and comment process, along with the general commitment of members of both organizations to support enactment of the Model in the states. Twenty-nine (29) other states have already enacted legislation based on these national Model Acts. Other states are currently considering enacting such legislation, and more are expected to follow. National, uniform legislation is very important given the nature of travel insurance. UStiA worked with the Insurance Department on the version of SB 2173 that appears before you today and includes amendments from the Insurance Department.

We urge you to approve this important legislation. Thank you again for your time today. I am happy to answer any questions.