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## **RURAL HEALTH TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE**

Tuesday and Wednesday, January 13-14, 2026  
Senate Chamber, State Capitol  
Bismarck, North Dakota

Senator Brad Bekkedahl, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 13, 2026.

**Members present:** Senators Brad Bekkedahl, Sean Cleary, David A. Clemens, Dick Dever, Kathy Hogan, Judy Lee, Jeffery J. Magrum, Tim Mathern, Kristin Roers, Desiree van Oosting, Kent Weston\*; Representatives Bert Anderson, Karen A. Anderson, Mike Beltz, Mike Berg, Jayme Davis, Gretchen Dobervich, Clayton Fegley, Kathy Frelich, Jared Hendrix, Dawson Holle, Dwight Kiefert, Alisa Mitskog\*, Eric J. Murphy, Jon O. Nelson, Karen M. Rohr, Gregory Stemen, Don Vigesaa, Scott Wagner, Robin Weisz

**Members absent:** Senator Kyle Davison; Representatives Macy Bolinske, Nico Rios, and Matthew Ruby

**Others present:** Senator David Hogue, Minot, and Representatives Jared C. Hagert, Emerado, and Mike Lefor, Dickinson, members of Legislative Management

Jonathan Alm, Donna Aukland, Krista Fremming, and Pat Traynor, Department of Health and Human Services

Beth Dittus, Legislative Council, Bismarck

*\*Attended remotely*

**It was moved by Senator Mathern, seconded by Senator Hogan, and carried on a voice vote that the minutes of the December 4, 2025, meeting be approved as distributed.**

### **FEDERAL RURAL HEALTH TRANSFORMATION GRANT UPDATE**

Mr. Pat Traynor, Interim Executive Director, Ms. Donna Aukland, Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Jonathan Alm, Legal Director, and Ms. Krista Fremming, Medical Services Interim Executive Director, Department of Health and Human Services, presented an update ([Appendix A](#)) on the results of the state's application for the federal Rural Health Transformation Program. They noted:

- The state was awarded \$198.9 million of funding for grant year 2026.
- Funding for the 1<sup>st</sup> grant year must be obligated by October 2026 and spent by September 2027.
- The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is required to approve each grant or initiative before funding can be obligated or spent.
- The department plans to use a variety of resources to share information regarding available funding opportunities.

Chairman Bekkedahl announced the committee will separate into divisions to review bill drafts relating to appropriations and bill drafts relating to policy changes.

### APPROPRIATIONS DIVISION

The appropriations division convened at 2:40 p.m. with Representative Vigesaa serving as division chairman. Representatives Vigesaa, B. Anderson, Berg, Mitskog, Murphy, Nelson, and Stemen and Senators Bekkedahl, Dever, Magrum, and Mathern were present. Senators Cleary and Davison were absent.

Mr. Brady A. Larson, Assistant Legislative Budget Analyst and Auditor, Legislative Council, reviewed a bill draft [\[25.1392.01000\]](#) to appropriate grant funds received through the federal Rural Health Transformation Program.

Mr. Alm and Ms. Aukland responded to division members' questions regarding the bill draft and the provisions of the federal Rural Health Transformation Program.

**It was moved by Representative Stemen, seconded by Representative Murphy, and carried on a roll call vote that the appropriations division recommend bill draft [\[25.1392.01000\]](#) to the full committee.** Representatives Vigesaa, B. Anderson, Berg, Murphy, Nelson, and Stemen and Senators Bekkedahl, Dever, Magrum, and Mathern voted "aye." No negative votes were cast.

The appropriations division recessed at 4:05 p.m.

### POLICY DIVISION

The policy division convened at 2:40 p.m. with Senator Lee serving as division chairman.

Ms. Beth Dittus, Assistant Legal Division Director, Legislative Council, presented a bill draft [\[25.1383.01000\]](#) relating to a requirement for schools to use the Presidential Physical Fitness Test in physical education instruction.

**It was moved by Senator Hogan, seconded by Representative Frelich, and carried on a voice vote that the policy division recommend bill draft [\[25.1383.01000\]](#) to the full committee.**

Ms. Dittus presented a bill draft [\[25.1384.01000\]](#) related to physician continuing education requirements related to nutrition and metabolic health.

**It was moved by Representative Rohr, seconded by Senator Roers, and carried on a voice vote that the policy division recommend bill draft [\[25.1384.01000\]](#) to the full committee.**

Ms. Dittus presented a bill draft [\[25.1385.01000\]](#) relating to a physician assistant licensure compact.

**It was moved by Senator Hogan, seconded by Representative Beltz, and carried on a voice vote that the policy division recommend bill draft [\[25.1385.01000\]](#) to the full committee.**

Ms. Dittus presented a bill draft [\[25.1386.01000\]](#) relating to the expansion of the scope of practice for pharmacists relating to prescriptive authority and therapeutic substitution.

Senator Roers distributed proposed amendments [\[25.1409.03000\]](#) to the bill draft. The committee considered but did not adopt the amendments.

**It was moved by Representative Frelich, seconded by Representative Rohr, and carried on a voice vote that the policy division recommend bill draft [\[25.1386.01000\]](#) to the full committee.**

The policy division recessed at 2:37 p.m.

The full committee reconvened at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, January 14, 2026.

### CONSIDERATION OF DIVISION RECOMMENDATIONS

Representative Vigesaa reviewed the bill draft [\[25.1392.01000\]](#) recommended by the appropriations division that appropriates funds received through the federal Rural Health Transformation Program.

**It was moved by Representative Vigesaa, seconded by Senator Dever, and carried on a roll call vote that the committee approve bill draft [25.1392.01000] and recommend it to the Legislative Management.** Senators Bekkedahl, Cleary, Clemens, Dever, Hogan, Lee, Magrum, Mathern, Roers, and van Oosting and Representative B. Anderson, K. Anderson, Beltz, Berg, Davis, Dobervich, Fegley, Frelich, Hendrix, Holle, Mitskog, Murphy, Nelson, Rohr, Stemen, Vigesaa, Wagner, and Weisz voted "aye." No negative votes were cast.

Senator Lee reviewed the following bill drafts that were considered by the policy division:

- A bill draft [25.1383.01000] to require schools to use the Presidential Physical Fitness Test.
- A bill draft [25.1384.01000] to require a nutrition component for physician continuing education requirements.
- A bill draft [25.1385.01000] for the state to join a physician assistant licensure compact.
- A bill draft [25.1386.01000] to expand the scope of practice for pharmacists relating to laboratory testing and prescriptive authority.

Senator Lee noted the policy division is not recommending any changes to the bill drafts and the bill drafts were previously approved by the full committee and recommended to the Legislative Management.

Senator Lee distributed information ([Appendix B](#)) regarding interstate occupational licensing compacts adopted by the state.

Ms. Aukland and Ms. Fremming responded to committee questions.

**It was moved by Representative Stemen, seconded by Senator Hogan, and carried on a roll call vote that the Chairman and the Legislative Council staff be requested to prepare a report and to present the report and recommended bill drafts to the Legislative Management.** Senators Bekkedahl, Cleary, Clemens, Dever, Hogan, Lee, Magrum, Mathern, Roers, van Oosting, and Weston and Representatives B. Anderson, K. Anderson, Beltz, Berg, Davis, Dobervich, Fegley, Frelich, Hendrix, Holle, Kiefert, Mitskog, Murphy, Nelson, Rohr, Stemen, Vigesaa, Wagner, and Weisz voted "aye." No negative votes were cast.

No further business appearing, Chairman Bekkedahl adjourned the meeting at 9:00 a.m.

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Brady A. Larson  
Assistant Legislative Budget Analyst and Auditor

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Allen H. Knudson  
Legislative Budget Analyst and Auditor

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