

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 1481, Dental Loss Ratio

Chairman Warrey and Members of the House Industry Business and Labor Committee:

My name is Pete Mecham. I am an endodontist in Grand Forks, where I have been in practice for 10 years. I am here today to testify in support of **HB 1481, Dental Loss Ratio**.

My patients come to me for root canals and root end surgeries (apicoectomies). One of the most frustrating things I encounter is when a patient needs care — sometimes urgently — and cannot afford it. This does not just happen with patients who are uninsured. It happens with alarming frequency to patients insured by companies that have found a way to decline to pay for their care.

Data shows that 25% or more of patient premium dollars for dental care are not actually spent on patient care. Instead, they are used for administrative expenses like high executive salaries and shareholder dividends. It's time for that to change.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires medical insurance companies to spend a minimum percentage of premiums on patient care, but our state has no such policy for dental insurers. It is time for that to change.

HB 1481 would require that dental insurers spend at least 83% of patient premiums on patient care. If they fall short, they would have to send rebates to the patients and employers that paid the premiums. This would be a powerful measure to incentivize insurers to pay for more patient care — and it represents an important patient protection measure that will strengthen dental insurance for all.

I ask you to please support North Dakota dental patients by advancing HB 1481.

Pete J. Mecham, DMD, MS