

Testimony Prepared for the
Senate Human Services Committee

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SB 2231: A Bill fan an Act to amend and reenact Section 50-241-45 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to covered services for medical assistance.

Chairwoman Lee, and members of the Senate Human Services Committee. I am Maurice Hardy, Director of Dakota Central Human Service Zone, which includes the counties of McLean, Mercer, Oliver and Sheridan. In addition, I am a member of the North Dakota Human Service Zone Director Association. I am here to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 2231 Fiscal Note LC# 25.0532.01000.

SB 2231 adds coverage to some of our most at-need citizens when it comes to dental and oral care. This coverage will help provide better care for our special populations, including elderly, special needs, medically fragile, children and foster children.

When a child comes into foster care and legal custody is provided to a human service zone director, human service zones are required, by statute and policy, to meet the needs of the child including their dental and oral health care. Foster children are covered by North Dakota Medicaid. This bill and fiscal amount will help zones and families to receive preventive care and develop a care plan for their children, foster children and the other special populations.

Most zones are finding that they do not have a dental professional, within their boundaries that accept Medicaid. This results in zone team members needing to transport a foster child for up to 2 hours one way, for required dental care and see a Medicaid provider. That is a minimum of five hours of time for the zone employee to meet the foster children's needs. More importantly for some foster children, this is a full day of educational instruction lost. If follow-up appointments are needed, even more days are lost. McKenzie Mountrail HSZ has had to travel from Watford City to Bismarck for a Medicaid provider, Ward HSZ has traveled to Rugby, Williston and Bismarck from Minot for care. Factoring in lost instructional days, zone wages, benefits, mileage, and time away from other cases this has significant time and financial impact.

In the general population, a low-income family seeking dental care on North Dakota Medicaid also results in often having to travel considerable distances and which would require reliable transportation. Their limited finances are often impacted by travel costs and lost wages from an hourly wage job. Children also lose a full day of educational

instruction. This poses a real burden. That is if they can find a provider that has openings and accepts Medicaid.

This Bill is a start and will shed more light on the needs of Medicaid and Medicaid Expansion insured, while providing valuable services in dental assessments, screenings and developing a treatment plan more locally with Teledentistry. The Director's Association asks for a DO PASS on SB 2231 fiscal note. Thank you and I will stand for questions.