



**Senate Human Services Committee**  
**SB 2255**  
**January 27, 2025**

Good morning, Chair Lee and Committee Members. I am Courtney Koebele and I serve as executive director of the North Dakota Medical Association. The North Dakota Medical Association is the professional membership organization for North Dakota physicians, residents, and medical students.

NDMA is opposed to SB 2255. This bill eliminates the requirement that the state health officer be a physician and removes the requirement of an advisory committee.

A physician serving as a state health officer is crucial because they bring a deep understanding of medical science and clinical practice to the table. This allows them to effectively guide public health policies, respond to disease outbreaks, advocate for preventative measures, and make informed decisions based on evidence-based medicine, particularly when navigating complex health issues at a statewide level.

Physicians can interpret complex medical data, analyze disease trends, and develop appropriate public health interventions based on their clinical knowledge. Their medical background enables them to translate scientific research into actionable policies, advocating for legislation that promotes public health. During outbreaks or public health emergencies, a physician can quickly assess the situation, implement appropriate containment strategies, and communicate effectively with the public. Due to their medical training and

expertise, physicians in this role can build public confidence in health recommendations.

The advisory committee is also removed. When the state has a non-physician state health officer, this advisory committee is very important. When the COVID pandemic hit, our state health officer, a non-physician, depended on her physician advisors and, in fact, created a separate committee that met weekly to advise her during the pandemic.

Removing the requirement of being a physician and removing the requirement for an advisory committee would be harmful to public health in North Dakota. I urge the committee to amend the bill to ensure public health protections remain in place.

Thank you for your time today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.