

January 21, 2021

The Honorable Judy Lee, Chair
The Honorable Jim Roers, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services
Sakakawea Room
600 E Boulevard Ave
Bismarck, ND 58505

Dear Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, and Members of the Committee,

The Association for Clinical Oncology (ASCO) is pleased to support **Senate Bill 2179**, which would allow for patients with cancer to continue receiving necessary care through telemedicine. Senate Committee on Human Services passage of SB 2179 would be a crucial step in helping to make sure this valuable method of care is available to North Dakota patients after the current public health emergency has ended.

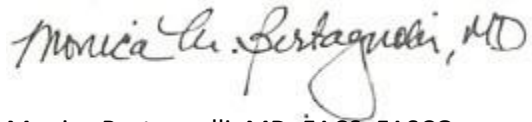
ASCO is a national organization representing physicians who care for people with cancer. With nearly 45,000 members, our core mission is to ensure that cancer patients have meaningful access to high quality cancer care. In keeping with this goal, ASCO has prioritized support for state legislation like SB 2179, which can increase access to care for patients with cancer while reducing treatment burden and disruption to patient lives.

Telemedicine has allowed providers to continue treating patients with cancer during the pandemic, both in rural and urban communities, with minimal disruption. Telemedicine has also led to fewer missed appointments than normally experienced with in-person visits. While telemedicine cannot fully replace face to face cancer care, the extension of covered benefits in recent months has rapidly changed the way we see patients and it prompted innovation that has allowed us to safely increase access to high quality care. Our affiliate organization, the American Society of Clinical Oncology, recently published an [Interim Position Statement](#) on Telemedicine in Cancer Care, which highlights the potential for telemedicine to play an important role in cancer care delivery moving forward.

We are encouraged to see that SB 2179 includes coverage and reimbursement for audio-only appointments if video is not available. Not all North Dakota patients have the same access to video connection and this provision would assure all individuals can access the benefits afforded by access telemedicine appointments.

ASCO applauds the swift bipartisan efforts thus far in working to deliver greater access to telemedicine in light of the pandemic. Continuing this coverage after the public health emergency has ended is an important step toward building upon the successes we have seen in telemedicine. If you have questions or would like assistance on any issue involving the care of individuals with cancer, please contact Aaron Segel at ASCO at aaron.segel@asco.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Monica L. Bertagnolli, MD". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "M" and "B".

Monica Bertagnolli, MD, FACS, FASCO
Chair of the Board
Association for Clinical Oncology