



Senate Human Services Committee
Chair Judy Lee

3-14-2025

Chair Lee and Members of the Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of a legislative management study on oral health, particularly as it relates to children, Native Americans, and individuals with disabilities. Oral health is a critical component of overall well-being, yet many individuals in North Dakota face significant barriers to accessing essential dental care. These disparities are especially pronounced among vulnerable populations, including children, Native American communities, and individuals with disabilities.

The Ronald McDonald Care Mobile (RMCM) of North Dakota has been a vital resource in addressing these disparities by delivering comprehensive mobile dental care to underserved communities. In 2024 alone, the RMCM provided services at 43 sites across the state, offering critical oral health care to 1,057 children. This program ensures that children who may otherwise lack access to preventive and restorative treatments receive necessary care, improving their long-term health outcomes.

Key findings from RMCM's 2024 service delivery summary include:

- **Total visits/encounters:** 1,799
- **Total number of services provided:** 8,166
- **Total value of treatment provided:** \$638,906
- **Demographics:** 51% of children served were Native American, with 60% uninsured and 37% covered by Medicaid.

The services provided through RMCM include diagnostic, preventive, and restorative treatments such as exams (804), X-rays (1,425), fluoride treatments (743), sealants (1,989), fillings (1,142), and extractions (234). These numbers underscore the significant need for oral health services in our state, particularly for those who face financial, geographic, and systemic barriers to care.

Many of the communities served by RMCM, including Belcourt, Dunseith, Cannon Ball, Fort Yates, and New Town, have high populations of Native American residents who experience disproportionately high rates of dental disease. Additionally, the mobile unit

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reaches rural and remote areas where dental care providers are scarce, ensuring that children receive the preventive and emergency dental services they need.

Given the documented need for expanded access to oral health care, I strongly urge the committee to support a legislative management study on oral health. Such a study would help identify gaps in services, evaluate current programs, and explore policy solutions to improve access to care for children, Native Americans, and individuals with disabilities. Investing in oral health today will reduce long-term healthcare costs and improve the quality of life for many North Dakotans.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions from the committee.

Sincerely,

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