

3/11/2025 - HCR 3014

Senate Human Services

~~Afternoon~~
Good Morning Chair Lee and Committee Members

For the record, my name is Representative Karen Rohr, and I represent District 31 which includes part of Morton County, all of Grant County and Sioux County and part of Hettinger County.

I stand before you today to introduce HCR 3014 on behalf of the ND Nurses Association. This concurrent resolution urges public health, health care systems, and health care providers to prioritize primary prevention in addressing vitamin D deficiency through multifaceted precision public health and medicine approaches that recognize both regional and individual determinants of health in diverse populations across the lifespan to improve patient outcomes, population health and decrease overall health care costs.

Why is addressing Vitamin D deficiency in North Dakota important?

As a Nurse Practitioner, I support primary prevention for Vitamin D deficiency in ND.

This is crucial for several reasons.

1. High Risk Due to Geography: ND has long winters with limited sunlight, which significantly impacts the body's ability to produce Vitamin D naturally. The lack of sunlight, especially in the colder months, makes residents more vulnerable to Vitamin D deficiency, which can affect their bone health, immune system, and overall well-being.
2. Health Benefits of Prevention: Primary prevention, such as promoting adequate Vitamin D intake through diet, supplementation, and safe sun exposure, helps prevent the onset of conditions related to deficiency. Vitamin D is vital for extra-renal tissues, prenatal health, brain function, immunity, pregnancy, cancer prevention, musculoskeletal health and cardiovascular health.
3. Improved Patient Outcomes: Vitamin D plays a crucial role in bone health by aiding calcium absorption. By supporting prevention, healthcare providers can reduce the risk of fractures, falls, and osteoporosis, especially in the older population. Furthermore, adequate Vitamin D levels are associated with better immune function, which is particularly important during flu season and for managing chronic illnesses.
4. Cost Effective Health Care: Preventing diseases related to Vitamin D Deficiency is cost effective. The cost of supplementation and education is far lower than the

costs associated with treating chronic diseases, or conditions like fractures, hospitalization, and long-term care due to osteoporotic fractures.

5. **Public Health Impact:** As a health care provider, supporting primary prevention can contribute to a larger public health initiative. By raising awareness and providing resources for vitamin D supplementation, you can reduce the population's overall health burden. This is particularly important in ND, where vitamin D deficiency is more prevalent due to environmental factors.
6. **Community Education:** By promoting the importance of vitamin D, health care providers can help educate the public on the significance of healthy habits like balanced nutrition, (including vitamin D rich foods like fortified milk, eggs, and fatty fish) and safe sun exposure. Educating individuals early on can have long-term positive effects on their health and quality of life.

In conclusion, supporting primary prevention of vitamin D deficiency in ND not only addresses a critical public health issue but also improves long-term health outcomes, reduces healthcare costs, and empowers individuals to take proactive steps toward better health.

Chair Lee and committee members, I also want to bring your attention to online testimony submitted in support of this resolution by Dr. Arnold & Dr. Obritsch, OB/GYN physicians, Dr. Andy McLean, Psychiatrist, Erin Berentson, ND Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics, and Genevieve Hudgins, a Board Certified Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner.

I urge a Do Pass HCR 3014.

I stand for questions.