

2025 HOUSE HUMAN SERVICES

HB 1070

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE PIONEER ROOM, STATE CAPITOL

HB 1070
1/8/2025
Human Services

Relating to the children's health insurance program

11:00 a.m. Chairman M. Ruby called the meeting to order.

Members present: Chairman M. Ruby, Vice Chairman Frelich, Representatives Anderson, Beltz, Bolinske, Dobervich, Fegley, Hendrix, Holle, Kiefert, Rios, Rohr

Members absent: Representative Davis

Discussion Topics:

- CHIP eligibility

11:01 a.m. Krista Fremming, Assistant Director of the Medical Services Division with the Department of Health and Human Services. Testified in favor of and submitted testimony #28192.

11:08 a.m. Chairman Schauer closed the hearing.

11:09 a.m. Representative Fegley moved a Do Pass.

11:09 a.m. Representative Frelich seconded the motion.

Representatives	Vote
Representative Matthew Ruby	Y
Representative Kathy Frelich	Y
Representative Karen Anderson	Y
Representative Mike Beltz	Y
Representative Macy Bolinske	Y
Representative Jayme Davis	AB
Representative Gretchen Dobervich	Y

Representative Cleyton Fegley	Y
Representative Jared Hendrix	Y
Representative Dawson Holle	Y
Representative Dwight Kiefert	Y
Representative Nico Rios	Y
Representative Karen Rohr	Y

11:10 a.m. Motion passed 12-0-1

Representative Dobervich will carry the bill.

11:11 a.m. Chairman Ruby closed the meeting.

Jackson Toman, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
HB 1070 ([25.8084.01000](#))

Human Services Committee (Rep. M. Ruby, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** (12 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HB 1070 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar.



Health & Human Services

Testimony
House Bill No. 1070
House Human Services Committee
Representative Ruby, Chairman
January 8, 2025

Chairman Ruby, and members of the House Human Services Committee, I am Krista Fremming, Assistant Director of the Medical Services Division with the Department of Health and Human Services (Department). I appear before you in support of House Bill No. 1070, which was introduced at the request of the Department.

The 2023 Legislative Assembly passed an increase in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) income eligibility limit from 175 to 210 percent of the federal poverty line (FPL). Prior to the 2023 legislative session, the Department communicated with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in anticipation of the change and was told it was possible. After this change passed, the Department was informed by CMS that the maximum FPL North Dakota can increase to is 200 percent with a five-percentage point standardized income disregard, for a total of 205 percent FPL.

This is the maximum FPL that North Dakota can be approved by CMS for CHIP, as federal regulations at 42 CFR 435.4 define optional targeted low-income children's financial need as a maximum of either 200 percent FPL or the pre-CHIP Medicaid level that was in place in 1997 plus 50 percentage points. In North Dakota, the 1997 income levels were 147 percent for children ages 0-6 and 111 percent for children ages 6-19, making 200 percent FPL the maximum.

This bill has no fiscal impact, as any decreases in projected enrollment due to the lower FPL are included in the Department's cost to continue in the Department's base budget.

This concludes my testimony. I would be happy to try to answer any questions the committee may have. Thank you.

2025 SENATE HUMAN SERVICES

HB 1070

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Human Services Committee Fort Lincoln Room, State Capitol

HB 1070
2/11/2025

Relating to the children's health insurance program.
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9:29 a.m. Chairman Lee opened the hearing.

Members Present: Chairman Lee, Vice-Chairman Weston, Senator Van Oosting, Senator Clemens, Senator Hogan, Senator Roers.

Discussion Topics:

- Current CHIPS enrollment
- Federal Poverty Level
- Affordable Care Act

9:29 a.m. Krista Fremming, Assistant Director of the Medical Services Division with Department of Health and Human Services, testified in favor and submitted testimony #36923.

9:43 a.m. Lynn Flieth, Director for the RSR Human Service Zone, testified in favor and submitted testimony #36734.

9:47 a.m. Senator Roers moved a Do Pass.

9:47 a.m. Weston seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Judy Lee	Y
Senator Kent Weston	Y
Senator David A. Clemens	Y
Senator Kathy Hogan	Y
Senator Kristin Roers	Y
Senator Desiree Van Oosting	Y

Motion passed 6-0-0.

Senator Roers will carry the bill.

9:49 a.m. Chairman Lee closed the hearing.

Andrew Ficek, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
HB 1070 ([25.8084.01000](#))

Human Services Committee (Sen. Lee, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** (6 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HB 1070 was placed on the Fourteenth order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.

Testimony Prepared for the
Senate Human Services Committee

February 11, 2025

By: Lynn Flieth, RSR Human Service Zone Director

RE: HB 1070 — Relating to Children's Health Insurance Program

Chair Lee, and members of the Senate Human Services Committee, my name is Lynn Flieth. I am the Director for the RSR Human Service Zone, which includes the counties of Ransom, Sargent and Richland. In addition, I am a member of the North Dakota Human Service Zone Director Association. I'm here today to provide testimony in support of HB 1070.

Human Service Zones provide economic assistance and child welfare services, which includes child protection, foster care, in-home case management, and handling CHINS (Child In Need of Services) referrals.

The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) helps meet the needs of working families who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, but who cannot afford health care coverage for their children.

Our state unemployment rate is lower than the national average, which may create the impression that North Dakotans shouldn't struggle to access adequate healthcare coverage. But residents in our state do face barriers to securing employment that compensates them with sufficient wages and health benefits. Other financial and environmental factors can also create barriers to affording medical coverage and care in our state.

North Dakotans haven't been immune to cost of living increases. While wages have increased modestly, they have not maintained pace with the rising costs of goods, services, and housing. The median rent in Bismarck is about \$1,289 per month,⁽¹⁾ and the median list price of a home in North Dakota is well over a quarter of a million dollars.⁽²⁾ The debt-to-income ratio in our state also increased by over 41% between 2013 and 2023.⁽³⁾

Families who live paycheck-to-paycheck feel these pain points acutely. Those in urban areas tend to face higher housing costs, while those in rural areas tend to be farther away from key resources. Approximately 75% of towns in North Dakota with a population of less than 2,100 people don't have a grocery store.^{(4) (5)}

¹ <https://www.zumper.com/rent-research/bismarck-nd>

² <https://www.redfin.com/state/North-Dakota>

³ <https://www.kxnet.com/news/top-stories/nd-records-highest-debt-to-income-ratio-increase-in-america/>

⁴ <https://www.ndliving.com/node/544>

⁵ https://www.northdakota-demographics.com/cities_by_population

These financial challenges are compounded by the cost of healthcare in our state. According to a 2022 study,⁽⁶⁾ ⁽⁷⁾ North Dakota ranks sixth in the nation for healthcare spending costs. The average cost of a prescription in our state is over \$200 dollars. Nationwide, the average cost for common ailments like upper respiratory infections, back problems, and urinary tract infections, is between \$1,000 and \$4,300 dollars.

It's also worth noting that when it comes to accessing standard medical care, rural North Dakotans spend more on travel time, gas money, and the vehicle maintenance costs associated with higher-mileage driving. To find specialized care, North Dakotans often have to travel even further.

Unfortunately, for families living paycheck to paycheck, essentials like health insurance and medical care often take a back seat. Immediate needs like food, housing, and heat come first; and even those are not always secure. Alarming, the median emergency savings for Americans nationwide is only \$600⁽⁸⁾ — so without coverage, a single visit to the emergency room can deal a serious financial blow.

By raising the CHIPS eligibility limit from 200% to 250% of the federal poverty limit, we'll reduce the risk of those emergencies, and we'll make a crucial investment into the health and wellbeing of children and families in North Dakota. The Human Service Zone directors strongly urge a "Do Pass" on this bill.

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

⁶ <https://www.nicerx.com/blog/healthcare-costs/>

⁷ <https://www.kxnet.com/news/state-news/healthcare-costs-in-the-us-nd-ranks-high/>

⁸ <https://www.empower.com/press-center/37-americans-cant-afford-emergency-expense-over-400-according-empower-research>

Testimony
House Bill No. 1070
Senate Services Committee
Senator Lee, Chairman
February 11, 2025

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