

North Dakota Legislature Health Services Committee**Dr Paul Tronsgard****President-Elect, North Dakota Dental Association****April 24, 2014**

My name is Paul Tronsgard. I am a general dentist in Fargo and currently president-elect of the North Dakota Dental Association. Unfortunately I will be out of town and unable to attend this meeting. Our board of trustees for the NDDA is aware that discussion will take place regarding the possible development of Dental Therapy as a new provider category in our state.

Though there are those in our state who experience barriers to care, a new category of provider may not be the answer. I am opposed to creating one for the following reasons: We have unprecedented numbers of new dentists coming in to North Dakota, and the bulk of them are working west of Cass County. The patient load at Fargo's Family Health Center is being seen so efficiently that I understand they have the ability to actually see walk-in patients. This is a remarkable change from just one-year ago. The Red River Valley Dental Access Clinic, which provides volunteer urgent care for our local underserved residents, is seeing fewer patients. We believe this trend is due to the improved access at the FHC. In addition, organized dentistry in North Dakota leads the battle to reduce barriers to care as evidenced by the numerous outreach clinics, the Ronald McDonald Care Mobile, as well as the past and future Missions of Mercy among others. This occurs because this is North Dakota. Communication and collaboration of like minded organizations works because we are different than any other place in the United States. I could go on but I know you are probably aware of these efforts.

We can all agree that there is still unmet need. We will continue to lead in addressing that need but know that a coalition of all the stakeholders, including our legislative body, is critical. We continue to need an increase in reimbursement rates for Medicaid. We believe we have the right number of providers and they

are increasingly in the areas of greatest need. Providing care for the growing Medicaid population can't be done at capacity when we receive in many, if not most, cases, less reimbursement than the cost of providing care. That issue needs to be addressed.

Another positive effort by organized dentistry is what we are calling the Case Management Outreach Initiative. Dr. Brent Holman will provide greater detail at your meeting than I will here, but at it's core, it is a program that uses our **current provider team** in an outreach program that targets at risk populations. It provides education, preventative care, screening examinations and most importantly, facilitates a "Dental Home" transition (with follow-up) for these people. Having a dental home is the single most important way to reduce dental morbidity. We are hoping that your committee and all the major dental and health care organizations in our state will endorse this exciting and innovative initiative. The pieces are all in place for this process to begin.

Thank you for your passion in improving the oral health of North Dakota residents and I sincerely hope we can work together in leading this endeavor.

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