Testimony
Ronald McDonald Care Mobile Update
Health Services Committee
November 4, 2015

Good morning Chairman Lee and members of the Health Services Committee. My name is Kathy Keiser, and I am the Executive Director of Ronald McDonald House Charities in Bismarck whose mission is "to improve the lives of children and their families". We own and operate the Ronald McDonald Care Mobile which delivers dental care to underserved children in the western half of North Dakota. We gratefully acknowledge the $100,000 appropriation that we received during the 2015 Legislative Session in HB 1004 in the Health Department budget. The $100,000 is being used to purchase dental supplies for the Care Mobile.

Chairman Lee invited us to update the committee on the mobile dental service delivery model, the effect of missed appointments on services provided by the Care Mobile and measures to reduce the effect of missed appointments and I am happy to do so.

The Ronald McDonald Care Mobile is a state of the art mobile dental clinic that brings oral health care directly to underserved children in their own neighborhoods in western North Dakota. We serve low-income, underserved children age 0-21 who do not have a regular dentist or haven't seen a dentist in the past two years. Our priority service areas include schools with greater than 40 percent of their children enrolled in the free- and reduced-fee school lunch program, Head Start programs, reservation areas, and Community health centers without dental clinics. We provide basic dental services including diagnostic, preventive, restorative and surgical services. Children needing extensive treatment or specialty care are referred as needed to local dentists and specialists. Our annual budget is approximately $654,000/year. Because we bring the care directly to the children, we eliminate many access to care issues such as transportation, the parent's ability to take time from work to bring the child to the dentist and availability of services in rural areas.

2015 is our fourth year of operation and we are fully booked - all the way through 2016. Through August 28th of the current calendar year, we have delivered services at 29 sites, treated 731 children, and provided 1,423 appointments and 6,102 dental services for a total value of $325,529. Of the children treated, 76% were Native American, 18% were Caucasian, 2% were African American, 3% were Hispanic and <1% were other races. This data indicates that we are reaching our target population, treating a high percentage of Native American children as they experience tooth decay at twice the rate of non-native children. In 2014, 74% of the children we served were uninsured, 23% were on Medicaid and 3% had private insurance. However, no child is denied care due to inability to pay. More than two-thirds of the children are in pre-school and elementary school. We are still awaiting turnaround of some of the Medicaid and insurance claims we've filed in order to summarize these numbers for the current year. Since the Care Mobile began operation, over 3,500 children have been served and more than 7,000 appointments provided. A comparison of yearly data shows the number of appointments and the cost of care per child has decreased slightly indicating that providing some continuity of care for the children can reduce their dental needs and costs.

The effect of missed appointments for the Care Mobile is not an issue because we bring the care directly to the children and rarely make actual appointments for them. Our service sites distribute the needed permission slips to the families well in advance of our scheduled appointments and they are also asked to prioritize the children that are in obvious pain. If a child misses school on the day that the Care Mobile is scheduled to visit, it is unfortunate for that child, but we always have many more waiting for care. The demand far exceeds our current capacity to treat the children that need our services at each site. Some of our summer sites do schedule appointments, but again, the demand is so great, that they always double-book the appointments and if a child does not make their appointment, we always have another child waiting for care. This is the beauty of our business plan and service delivery model – missed appointments are rarely an issue.

I'd like to take just a moment to tell you about our newest preventive effort, the RMHC School-Based Sealant Program. We've partnered with the ND Department of Health, Oral Health Program and have received a three year HRSA (Health Resources Services Administration) Grant to support the program. While the Bridging the Dental Gap Dental Director and the Care Mobile Program Manager will oversee the program, it is completely separate from the Care Mobile. We have contracted with a part-time dental hygienist to schedule and facilitate the 24 sites that she'll visit in the first three years of the program, providing the preventive services (sealants and fluoride varnishes) to the students. The Hygienist will visit these sites prior to the Care Mobile visits – also helping to identify children with the greatest need for the subsequent visit. With the addition of this program, we anticipate that we will serve approximately 1,400 children in 2016.

Thank you for this opportunity to give you an update on the Ronald McDonald Care Mobile. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

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