

Human Services Interim Committee
Testimony Regarding Caregiver Supports and Services
January 5, 2016
Dan Hannaher, Legislative Affairs Director, Sanford Health

Chairman Hogan, and members of the Human Services Interim Committee, for the record my name is Dan Hannaher. I am Legislative Affairs Director for Sanford Health, and I also serve as Executive Director of the Health Policy Consortium.

During last year's legislative session, I along with representatives of other hospital providers testified in opposition to HB 1279 in its original form. While well intentioned, we effectively argued that the bill would have been duplicative to regulations already imposed by the Federal government under CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) Rules and the accreditation measurements of industry standards dictated by the Joint Commission. In addition, the bill's mandated duties would have created new and unfair legal liabilities for hospitals.

Nonetheless, we were supportive of this Study which was what the final bill's passage calls for, because we believe there are things that can be done to improve Caregiving in North Dakota. From the beginning of this process we have worked with AARP in seeking consensus on issues of mutual agreement, and we will continue to search for common ground that will benefit our patients following discharge from our facilities.

For instance, last week the media reported on two initiatives that Sanford Health has been involved with to creatively enhance care to patients following their hospital stay.

We've partnered with the New Life Center, a shelter for men in Fargo, in designating beds in the shelter for a respite program for the homeless to recover after a hospital stay or emergency room visit. A Sanford nurse is in place at the Center to help care for those transitioning their care needs.

Also last week, a story reported on the effectiveness of the Community Paramedic program established by FM Ambulance. This program has reduced the need for frequent ambulance services and ER visits by patients considered high-users because of chronic health issues or other described needs. By shifting to a

proactive caregiving response instead of waiting for the emergency call a significant cost saving is being realized and patients are getting better and more personal care. For the 56 individuals targeted by the program, ER visits have been reduced by 48 percent.

So, hospitals are fully engaged. Patient care is paramount.

But today, we'd like to tell you what it is we do, within the hospital setting.

- What do our Discharge Plans and Procedures look like?
- How do we monitor our own quality?
- How do we measure ourselves to industry standards and government regulation?
- How are we held accountable?

To provide you with those insights I'm pleased to have with me today, BevAnn Walth, Director of Case Management and Social Work here in Bismarck at CHI St. Alexius. She is a subject matter expert on Discharge Planning, Coordination of Care, and Medical Homes. Bev Ann will only be able to skim the surface on this important topic, but I'm sure you'll gain great insights from her.

We had also hoped to have Darrold Bertsch the CEO of Sakakawea Medical Center in Hazen with us to share his perspective from the Critical Access Hospital world of smaller, rural, community hospitals. But Darrold was unable to be here and hopes to provide the committee with written testimony or the opportunity to publicly present at one of your future meetings.

We're going to deluge the committee with documents as well. BevAnn will reference these documents; the rules from CMS and the standards of practice from the Joint Commission. We hope they won't overwhelm you, because they provide not only important information on this subject but also give the context for how we as hospital providers function and perform on a daily basis.

We're dedicated to the work of health and healing. And we strive to provide exceptional care in a patient centered environment.

Chairman Hogan, members of the committee, I give you BevAnn Walth.