



House Human Services Committee

SB 2179

March 15, 2021

Chairman Weisz and Committee Members, I am Courtney Koebele, the Executive Director of the North Dakota Medical Association. The North Dakota Medical Association is the professional membership organization for North Dakota physicians, residents, and medical students.

NDMA strongly supports SB 2179 as it was originally filed.

NDMA adopted a policy position in support of telehealth parity at its 2020 policy forum. Payment parity is an issue that is supported by all types of physicians and specialties. To assess the need, NDMA assembled a broad coalition of health care stakeholders, including ND Psychiatric Society, Essentia Health, CHI St. Alexius, Trinity Health, Altru Health, Mid Dakota Clinic, Bone and Joint, ND Academy of Physician Assistants, Physical Therapy Association of North Dakota, ND Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health, Mental Health America of North Dakota, and the Mental Health Advocacy Network. Together, this group supports telehealth payment parity legislation that will require health plans to reimburse providers for covered telehealth services delivered to patients at reimbursement rates not less than in-person services.

While telehealth cannot replace all patient care, the extension of telehealth benefits in recent months has rapidly changed the way clinicians see patients and has provided a push for innovation that has allowed clinicians to safely increase access to high quality care.

Patients have reported that telehealth has been a positive experience, which results in fewer “no-shows” than in-person visits. Patients are grateful to have telehealth as an option.

As this committee is aware, North Dakota has a law regarding insurance mandates. That law provides “A legislative measure mandating health insurance coverage of services or payment for specified providers of services may not be

acted on by any committee of the legislative assembly unless the measure is accompanied by a cost-benefit analysis provided by the legislative council.”

SB 2179 provides for neither of those since the proposed changes do not mandate new coverage or provide coverage to new provider types. Telehealth services are already covered services and no new providers are directed in the statute.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions.