

Senate Bill 2221- In Opposition
Human Services Committee
67th Legislative Assembly of North Dakota
January 27, 2021

Good morning Chairman Lee, Vice Chair Roers, and Human Service Committee Members,

My name is Joan Connell. As a pediatrician and a former pharmacist, I ask that you Do-Not-Pass Senate Bill 2221. While I appreciate the intent to make immunizations available to all, I am extremely concerned that further decreasing the age that pharmacists may administer vaccines will result in fewer children being seen for well checks. Here is a link https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/periodicity_schedule.pdf to a chart that indicates the types of age-based screening and anticipatory guidance services that are provided to children at their well checks. Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota clearly values well checks for children, as they have included well child visits for 3-6 year old children as a claims-based quality measure in their BlueAlliance quality program <https://www.bcbsnd.com/providers/programs/bluealliance/provider-measurement>. This anticipatory care is so important, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services have established the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment program <https://www.medicare.gov/medicaid/benefits/early-and-periodic-screening-diagnostic-and-treatment/index.html> to make sure that children without ready access to a physician will have access to periodic screening exams as well as receive necessary immunizations. More information about our state's program, Health Tracks, can be found here <https://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/medicalserv/health-tracks/>.

One of the primary reasons parents bring their children to well checks is because of necessary immunizations <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/142/5/e20174019>. Yet these visits are essential for screening for school readiness, as well as many other potential issues that are noted in the Bright Futures chart found in the above link. When linked together, the need for immunizations and preventive care work synergistically to motivate parents to bring children in to be seen. Furthermore, the House's Human Services Committee sat through hours of testimony just two days ago, where parents expressed the strong desire to have a provider explain immunizations and make them feel like part of the conversations. These families are begging for a medical home- which is what every North Dakota patient deserves, and which is absolutely necessary to improve health outcomes for our citizens.

So, I ask you, as the Senate Human Services Committee- to support legislation that improves access to quality care for our North Dakota citizens, which by definition, supports the medical home. Senate Bill 2221 is not that piece of legislation. I am happy to take any questions you may have-now or in the future.