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## HEALTH SERVICES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, November 29, 2023  
Roughrider Room, State Capitol  
Bismarck, North Dakota

Senator Kristin Roers, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**Members present:** Senators Kristin Roers, Michelle Axtman, Jeff Barta, Judy Lee; Representatives Gretchen Dobervich\*, Kathy Frelich, Dwight Kiefert, Carrie McLeod, Alisa Mitskog\*, Emily O'Brien\*, Todd Porter

**Member absent:** Representative Robin Weisz

**Others present:** See [Appendix A](#)

*\*Attended remotely*

**It was moved by Senator Barta, seconded by Senator Axtman, and carried on a voice vote to approve the minutes of the August 31, 2023, meeting as distributed.**

### STUDY OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

Mr. Ron Lawler, Program Director, North Dakota State College of Science and Sanford ambulance emergency medical services program, presented information ([Appendix B](#)) regarding emergency medical services (EMS) education. He noted:

- The length of an EMS education program is determined by several factors, including national and state standards and the ability for a student to complete lab, clinical, and ride time.
- EMS education program instruction time requirements can range from 40 to 48 hours for emergency medical responders to 1500 to 1800 hours for paramedics.

Ms. Mari Volk, Dean of Current and Emerging Technologies, Bismarck State College, presented information ([Appendix C](#)) regarding EMS education provided by the institution. She noted:

- Bismarck State College offers emergency medical technician and paramedic technology programs.
- The number of annual graduates from each program has ranged from 8 to 24 since 2018.

Ms. Julie Traynor, Consortium Director, Dakota Nursing Program, presented information ([Appendix D](#)) regarding options to coordinate health care education programs. She noted:

- Four community colleges in the state participate in the Dakota Nursing Program.
- Education is provided at the campuses and at satellite locations across the state.
- The four colleges collaborate on curriculum and graduation requirements.

Mr. Adam Parker, Advisory Committee Co-Chairman, North Dakota EMS Association, presented information ([Appendix E](#)) regarding rural EMS staffing issues. He noted:

- Rural ambulance services have increased compensation to improve retention.
- Staffing costs account for an average of 57 percent of total expenses of an ambulance operation.
- Approximately 70 percent of rural ambulance operations have at least one full-time person on staff.
- Allowing EMS personnel to participate in the state public safety retirement plan may improve employee retention.

Ms. PJ Ringdahl, Regional Adviser, North Dakota EMS Association, presented information ([Appendix F](#)) regarding post-incident assistance provided to rural emergency medical providers. She noted:

- The Department of Health and Human Services' critical incident stress management program is available to all first responders at no cost.
- The critical incident stress management program is available anytime to respond to an incident where the potential for critical incident stress may occur or has already occurred.
- The North Dakota EMS Association is developing resources to improve rural ambulance personnel well-being and resiliency.

Mr. Aaron Birst, Executive Director, North Dakota Association of Counties, Mr. Jason Horning, Next Generation 9-1-1 Program Manager, North Dakota Association of Counties, and Mr. Mike Dannenfelzer, Communications Director, Central Dakota Communications Center, provided comments regarding the dispatch of EMS. They noted:

- EMS in the state are dispatched through 21 primary public safety answering points (PSAPs), 1 secondary PSAP, and 1 military PSAP.
- Some answering points gather data regarding dispatches, including response times and failure to respond to service.
- Answering points are reviewing options to transfer certain calls to the 988 response system.

Mr. Chris Price, Director, Emergency Medical System Unit, Department of Health and Human Services, presented information ([Appendix G](#)) regarding EMS in the state. He noted:

- Approximately two ambulance services close each biennium.
- The main indicator that an ambulance service is in distress is the failure to respond to requests for service.
- There is no requirement for PSAPs to report ambulance response times or failure to respond for service to the Department of Health and Human Services.

Ms. Rebecca Fricke, Interim Executive Director, Public Employees Retirement System, responded to committee questions regarding options to allow EMS personnel to participate in the state public safety retirement plan.

Representative Porter indicated he will review options for a bill draft to allow EMS personnel to participate in the state public safety retirement plan.

### **STUDY OF BRAIN INJURY SERVICES**

Ms. Rebecca Quinn, Director, North Dakota Brain Injury Network, and Ms. Judy Dettmer and Ms. Jill Ferrington, National Association of State Head Injury Administrators, presented information ([Appendix H](#)) regarding brain injury services. They noted:

- A study is being conducted to determine whether brain injury services in the state are adequate.
- The study is using focus groups, written surveys, and interviews to gather information.
- The final study report is anticipated to be complete by September 2024.

### **STUDY OF THE COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF NORTH DAKOTA**

Ms. Chrystal Bartuska, Life and Health/Medicare Division Director, Insurance Department, provided comments regarding the Comprehensive Health Association of North Dakota (CHAND) program. She noted:

- The Insurance Department sent letters to CHAND major medical program enrollees to encourage them to review other options for health insurance.
- The department is reviewing options to transition CHAND medical supplemental plan enrollees to other providers.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Chairman Roers announced the committee is tentatively scheduled to meet in March and September 2024.

No further business appearing, Chairman Roers adjourned the meeting at 2:00 p.m.

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Brady A. Larson  
Assistant Legislative Budget Analyst and Auditor

ATTACH:8