

Testimony
Senate Bill 2099
Senate Human Services Committee
January 9, 2017, 9:30 a.m.
North Dakota Department of Health

Good morning Chairman Lee and members of the Senate Human Services Committee. My name is Molly Howell, and I am the immunization program manager for the North Dakota Department of Health. I am here today to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 2099.

Due to the required reduction in the general fund budget, the Department of Health is requesting changes to North Dakota Century Code 23-01-29 to reflect the discontinuation of the universal vaccination program at local public health units (LPHUs). The universal vaccination program provided vaccines to LPHUs for administration to children who have health insurance.

The Department of Health's budget for the 2015-2017 biennium included \$2,976,853 for vaccines provided to insured children at LPHUs. For the 2017-2019 biennium, the Department of Health's recommended budget does not include funding for vaccines provided to insured children at LPHUs.

Since the Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires insurance coverage at the first dollar for vaccines, and all LPHUs are now able to bill insurance for the cost of vaccines and their administration fees, the Department decided to end this program as part of its required general fund reduction. As of July 1, 2016, the LPHUs are now purchasing vaccines for administration to insured children and billing insurance. The federal Vaccines for Children Program (VFC) continues to provide vaccines for children who are American Indian, Medicaid-eligible, uninsured, or underinsured (i.e., they have health insurance, but insurance does not cover vaccines).

The remainder of the text in Century Code 23-01-29 allows for the Department of Health to continue offering a choice of vaccine brands which may be ordered by healthcare providers through the Department of Health for the VFC Program. Language was added to allow the Department to restrict this brand choice in the event of a shortage or delay in vaccine availability.

This concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.