



**Vision**

*The North Dakota Hospital Association will take an active role in major Healthcare issues.*

**Mission**

*The North Dakota Hospital Association exists to advance the health status of persons served by the membership.*

## **North Dakota Hospital Association Board of Directors Meeting Minutes December 13, 2024**

**Directors Present\*:** Tim Blasl, Mike Delfs, Mariann Doeling, Stephanie Gefroh-Ellison, M.D., Todd Forkel, Tiffany Lawrence, Nikki Lindsey, Alan O'Neil, Todd Schaffer, M.D., Reed Reyman,

**Others Present\*:** Kelly Cermak, Melissa Hauer, Bobby Sanders, Jaret Kanerek, Elizabeth Summy, Laurie Tupper

\*All participated by video conferencing.

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the North Dakota Hospital Association (NDHA) was called to order at 9:00 a.m., Central time, on December 13, 2024, by Mariann Doeling, Chair of the Board. A quorum of directors was present.

**Call for Conflicts** - Ms. Doeling asked if there were any perceived or known conflicts of interest as per items listed on the agenda for this meeting. There were none.

**Agenda Approval** - Ms. Doeling asked if there were any proposed changes to the meeting agenda. Alan O'Neil asked to add the topic of Trinity Health to the agenda.

**Transfer of duties to new Chair** - At this time Tim Blasl, President, thanked Marianne Doeling for her time as the Chair and introduced the new Chair of the NDHA Board of Directors, Todd Schaffer, M.D.

**Board Training: Conflict of Interest Policy** - Melissa Hauer, NDHA General Counsel/VP, provided annual training on NDHA's conflict of interest policy. All board members were reminded to sign the annual conflict-of-interest statement and return it to NDHA.

**Board Training: Anti-trust Policy** - Ms. Hauer provided annual training on NDHA's anti-trust policy.

**Board Training: Member Internal Conflict Policy-** Ms. Hauer provided annual training on NDHA's member internal conflict policy.

**Board Training: Advocacy Tenants** – Ms. Hauer provided annual training on NDHA's advocacy tenants.

**New Member** – Mr. Blasl welcomed Stephanie Gefroh-Ellison, M.D., to her first meeting as an NDHA director.

**Medicaid managed care directed payments presentation by LS Point** – Bobby Sanders and Jaret Kanarek, partners, LS Point, a health care law firm that offers legal services focused on Medicaid finance and reimbursement, presented on the benefits and risks of implementing a Medicaid managed care directed payments program in North Dakota. North Dakota currently does not have a directed payment program or hospital tax. Such a program would need to be implemented by the State legislature. There was discussion about getting more specific information about the impact by facility and that there would not be time to pursue such a program at the 2025 legislative session which is starting early next month. There was consensus to continue the conversation though for possible future implementation.

**NDHA Financials** - Kelly Cermak, Finance Manager, presented NDHA's financial statement overview through September, 2024. Mr. Cermak reported regarding revenue and expenses as compared to budget. Mr. Cermak reported we are in the middle of an audit and will have those results at the next board meeting. There was discussion regarding whether some of the cash should be moved to investments. This will be put on the agenda for the next meeting. Upon a motion duly made, seconded, and adopted, the financial statement was approved as presented.

**NDHF Director Appointments** – Mr. Blasl informed the Board that Jodi Hovdenes, President, CHI St. Alexis Health Carrington, Scott Schneider, CEO, Vibra Hospital Central Dakotas, and Lukas Fischer, CEO/Administrator, Linton Hospital and CEO, South Central Health, were recommended to serve another term on the North Dakota Hospital Foundation (NDHF) Board of Directors.

**NDHA Health Benefits Trustee Appointments** - Mr. Blasl informed the Board that Rachel Ray, CFO/Human Resources Coordinator, Unity Medical Center, and Derek Schaff, CFO, Linton Hospital, were recommended to serve another term on the NDHA Health Benefits Plan Board of Trustees. Upon a motion duly made, seconded, and adopted, Ms. Hovdenes, Mr. Schneider and Mr. Fischer were approved to serve another term on the NDHF Board of Directors and Ms. Ray and Mr. Schaff were approved to serve another term on the NDHA Health Benefits Trust Board of Trustees.

**Election of NDHA Chair-Elect and Secretary/Treasurer** – Mr. Blasl reported that Ben Bucher, CEO, Towner County Medical Center, and Mike Delfs, President/CEO, Jamestown Regional Medical Center, were willing to serve as Chair-Elect and Nikki Lindsey, CEO, Dakota Regional Medical Center, was willing to serve as Secretary/Treasurer. Upon a motion duly made, seconded, and adopted, Ms. Lindsey was elected Secretary/Treasurer.

At 10:09 a.m., Mr. Delfs left the meeting, and the remaining members discussed the two candidates for Chair-Elect. Upon a motion duly made, seconded, and adopted, Mr. Delfs was elected Chair-Elect. At 10:15 a.m., Mr. Delfs rejoined the meeting.

**2025 State Legislative Policy Platform** – Mr. Blasl explained the NDHA Board members need to approve NDHA's platform for the 2025 state legislative session.

Medicaid reimbursement – We support a three percent per year increase in traditional Medicaid reimbursement. Medicaid Expansion reimbursement is currently at up to 145% of Medicare, but it is unevenly distributed across providers so that not all are receiving 145%. There was discussion about advocating in the legislature to ensure that all providers receive no less than 145%.

Behavioral Health – NDHA supports the building of new state hospital. Workforce – NDHA supports the Social Worker and Occupational Therapy licensing compacts that will be introduced. NDHA will also support the healthcare worker assault protection bill that will be introduced.

Mr. Blasl reminded everyone of the importance to join the NDHA weekly legislative calls on Friday afternoon for an update on legislative activity.

NDHA will support a nurse agency bill that says an agency has to pay a fee to be licensed to work in North Dakota, as long as it doesn't discourage agencies from working in the state.

340B Drug Pricing Program– Ms. Hauer is working with the North Dakota Pharmacists Association and the North Dakota Board of Pharmacy on a bill to protect 340B Drug Pricing Program contract pharmacy arrangements. The North Dakota Pharmacy Association will take the lead on this bill. We will continue to work with these entities and others in a coalition to support this bill.

Prior Authorization – A prior authorization reform bill was introduced last session and became a study, but no bill drafts came out of the study. There is a push to try another bill.

Other issues – Ms. Hauer and Mr. Blasl will be meeting with Representative Robin Weisz to discuss rural ambulance taxing districts. Other issues we expect to come up during the

2025 legislative session include vaccines, abortion, rural ambulance taxing districts, transgender health care, and guardianship.

North Dakota Organization of Nurse Leaders (NDONL) – Mr. Blasl and Ms. Hauer met with NDONL leaders, Trisha Jungels, Secretary/Treasurer and Bonnie Vangerud, President, to review their legislative priorities. Behavioral health treatment is their top priority. The College and University Nursing Education Administrators (CUNEA) are asking for \$3.7 million for more nurse simulation training clinical hours. There was discussion and a request for the data that supports the request. .

Upon a motion duly made, seconded, and adopted, the NDHA 2025 state legislative platform as presented was approved.

### **Reports:**

**AHA Update** – Elizabeth Summy, AHA Regional Executive, joined the meeting at 11:02 a.m. Ms. Summy reported on the United States Senate and House changes that will come with the new Congress being sworn in on January 3<sup>rd</sup>. She noted that South Dakota Senator John Thune being elected as the Senate Majority Leader should help health care. Ms. Summy reported that during the lame duck session they will prioritize the following: government funding, disaster relief, National Defense Authorization Act, health care extenders, statutory PAYGO, farm bill, and judicial nominations. Ms. Summy shared the health care appointments that President-elect Trump has made. Ms. Summy reported that the AHA priorities will be to defend against Medicare and Medicaid cuts, extend ACA enhanced premium subsidies, protect the 340B Drug Pricing Program, regulatory relief, not-for-profit status of hospitals, and commercial insurer accountability. Ms. Summy left the meeting at 11:16 a.m.

**NDHA 2024 PAC** – Mr. Blasl shared who has contributed to the NDHA state PAC in 2024. He will be making one more push for contributions. Mr. Blasl stated PAC dollars are crucial during legislative time.

**HSI** – Mr. Blasl reported we have a renewed three-year Group Purchasing Organization (GPO) contract with Vizient. HSI was recognized by Vizient recently for having the highest general administrative fee percentage growth in 2024. HSI is conducting an internal assessment of GPO services, the results should be completed by the end of the year. HSI has a physician peer review program that is currently being used by 22 NDHA members. Laurie Tupper is the new lead contact for this program.

HSI Collections – Seven CAH members are using our debt collection services. This division continues to be profitable.

**NDHF** – Mr. Blasl reported the hospital economic impact study report will be printed next week and the state of healthcare report should be printed next month. The CAH financial

analysis will be done internally. We are still waiting to get information from CAH's. We only have information from 16 of 35 CAH's. The new audio/visual equipment update has been completed for NDHA's boardroom.

**NDHA Health Benefits Trust** – NDHA offers a self-funded health benefits plan to its members for their employee health coverage which is administered by Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota. Marsh McClennan is the consultant to the Trust. The Trust is doing well financially.

**Presidents Report** – Mr. Blasl stated the next four months would be focused on the legislative session. After the session, Mr. Blasl wants to have a face-to-face strategic planning meeting in conjunction with an NDHA Board of Director's meeting. A key agenda item would be a proposal of adding a governmental relations position and a data analyst to the NDHA staff. Job descriptions for the new positions were requested as well as comparisons of other hospital associations' employee structure.

**Approval of Minutes** - Upon a motion duly made, seconded, and adopted, the Board going into executive session was approved. At 11:37 a.m., Mr. Blasl left the meeting. Ms. Hauer asked if everyone who attended the special meeting executive session on October 30, 2024, had an opportunity to review the minutes. Upon a motion duly made, seconded, and adopted, the minutes from the special meeting executive session on October 30, 2024 were approved. Upon a motion duly made, seconded and adopted, the Board exiting executive session was approved. Mr. Blasl rejoined the meeting at 11:40 a.m.

**Other Business** -There was a discussion regarding whether to engage with Trinity Health, Minot, about rejoining NDHA. The Board directed Mr. Blasl to keep open communication with Trinity Health to ensure we are aligned during the legislative session.

There was discussion regarding NDHA producing a 30-60 second video on the importance of North Dakota hospitals to use for a media campaign to inform the public that the quality of health care in North Dakota is very good.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:59 p.m., Central time.

*Laurie Tupper*  
Recording Secretary