



Another busy and productive week of the 99th Legislative session is complete, with progress being made to enhance workforce and healthcare professions and strengthen protections for our children.

As a healthcare provider serving smaller communities, I know how important it is for underserved areas to remove unnecessary barriers for qualified providers to serve our rural communities. Being cared for close to home shouldn't be considered a privilege.

Working with the Department of Health and several allied healthcare professions, Senate Bill 87 updates the Board of Medical and Osteopathic Examiners to strengthen the ability of seven non-physician professions (Respiratory Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Paramedics, Athletic Trainers, Physician Assistants, Genetic Counselors, and Dietitians) regulated by the board to be involved in matters related to licensure, practice, education, and discipline of their professions. SB 87 lets our allied healthcare professionals know they are valued for their care to our State's citizens. The bill also makes good economic sense because it avoids additional costs to our State's taxpayers and won't increase the number of regulatory boards. Instead, it will help foster a positive environment for the many professions in the modern healthcare industry.

SB 87 and companion bills SB 63 & 64, addressing emergency service personnel and ambulance services, all passed out of the Senate this week. I am particularly proud of the transformative and long-overdue changes in EMS, and I commend the DOH for their work on behalf of our healthcare professionals. It sends a strong message of support to providers looking to locate in our State.

Other favorable workforce legislation that saw action this week include HB 1013 and 1015; licensure compacts for social workers, and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses. The bills were drafted based on

recommendations from the long-term care summer study to support licensure portability and address workforce shortages that impact this industry. South Dakota currently has seven healthcare licensure compacts in place. These compacts can streamline and expedite the process of bringing new qualified professionals to South Dakota to fill job openings. This session will also look at compacts for psychology and counseling professionals.

The Senate also unanimously passed SB 79, revising and strengthening South Dakota's child pornography laws and including new protections requested by the Attorney General that would make AI-generated child pornography a crime. This includes so-called "deepfake" images or videos, as well as images that aren't of an actual person but are created to look like a child involved in prohibited sex acts. The bill will now go to the House for action.

After being approved by the voters in 2022, South Dakota's Medicaid expansion went into effect in July of last year, allowing individuals to qualify for Medicaid by raising the income requirement to 138% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), up to \$41,400 for a family of 4, and adding childless adults. The Senate passed Senate Joint Resolution 501 (SJR 501) that would ask voters to decide if work may be required for some of the Medicaid expansion participants. It makes sense to ask the voters about a change to the constitutional amendment they supported. This resolution is also headed to the House for consideration.

It was an honor this past week to visit with USD Health Science students during their visit to the Capitol. It was an excellent opportunity to share about bills I was working on as well as sharing tips on how to be a good advocate for their profession.

If you are planning on visiting the Capitol, I have information on my website at <https://www.votesydneydavis.com/visiting-pierre>

As your representative in Pierre, your opinions, questions, and concerns about our State's business are very important to me.

Because of the volume of emails legislators receive, I prioritize emails from District 17 residents. You can help out by including where you live in your email. Contact me at Sydney.Davis@sdlegislature.gov.

