



The new legislative session kicked off with the Governor's traditional State of the State address. It's a good time to review our State's successes and identify and prioritize opportunities and future goals.

I appreciated the Governor highlighting the unique healthcare struggles faced by our small towns and rural communities and her support for improving Emergency Medical Service access across the State including supporting our EMTs in innovative ways which can lead to better health outcomes for patients in need.

It was also good to hear the commitment from the Governor about caring for the lives of our mothers and children, especially among our more vulnerable populations.

Putting workforce development as a top priority across the State and the efforts to ease the red tape and recruit new workers is essential to keeping South Dakota's economy growing. It's also crucial for the State to keep its commitment to the Blue Ribbon task force on teachers' pay and their recommendation to make teachers the first priority.

Now, the work of this legislative session begins in earnest.

An issue that will be a key focus of this session and has significant implications for more rural districts like District 17 is the concern about the sustainability of Long-Term Care facilities. These facilities are a meaningful resource for caring for our senior South Dakotans closer to home and their family.

Last session's funding of Medicaid and community health service providers was a good step toward fulfilling our State's obligations to our vulnerable population. However, many facilities still face challenges, such as the high cost of upgrading their buildings and equipment.

The facilities are also being pinched by workforce shortages, limiting the availability of beds.

The legislature may consider incentivizing cooperation, resource sharing, and support for reinvestment in their facilities. This could be an opportunity for the government to support efforts of the private sector to work more efficiently for the benefit of individuals and communities impacted.

During the last session, I worked on several measures to help address the workforce shortage challenge, especially in healthcare. Our rural communities depend on these professionals to be a first line of care close to home. Working with my colleagues, we established guidelines for community paramedics, adult day services, and expanded recruitment assistance for dental practices and rural health care to help address the workforce shortage issue. I remain committed to ensuring we are doing our best to allow our adequately trained healthcare workers to practice in all parts of our State, with a particular focus on underserved communities.

As the session continues, I will depend on your opinions, questions, and concerns about our State's business.

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](mailto:Sydney.Davis@sdlegislature.gov).