



The first week of the legislature starts with updates on the state from the Governor, the Supreme Court's Chief Justice, and the state of the Tribes. During the second week, the Committees start meeting more regularly and getting updates from the state agencies.

In this session, I serve on three Senate committees; Education, State Affairs, and Vice-Chair of Health and Human Services.

This past week, in the Education Committee, we heard department updates from the new Secretary of the Department of Education (DOE), Joe Graves. South Dakota is continuing to have issues with teacher shortages. Another challenge for public schools is dropping school attendance rates. South Dakota also follows a national trend with an increase in homeschooled students. Also, the committee heard testimony for the re-appointment of student regent Brock Brown to the Board of Regents. He is a USD law student. This will be his second term on the board of regents serving as the student regent. His re-appointment moved through the Senate unanimously.

In the Health and Human Services Committee, the Secretary of the Department of Human Services (DHS), Shawnie Rechtenbaugh, discussed the numerous services the Department provides. One area highlighted was how it is helping the disabled and elderly population impacted by nursing home closures, as well as scarce or difficult-to-obtain facility care placement. Rechtenbaugh emphasized that the Dakota at Home phone number is the one-stop shop for a personalized service to help find resources best suited to individual needs. ([www.dakotaathome.org](http://www.dakotaathome.org))

We also heard an update from the newly appointed Secretary of the Department of Health (DOH), Melissa Magstadt. The DOH discussed its role in public health, especially collecting data and assisting the public and prevention awareness campaigns. Alarming statistics included that South Dakota has the seventh highest rate

of suicide in the United States, and we have seen our rates increase dramatically over the last couple of years. If you know someone who needs help, please visit [SDsuicideprevention.org/data](https://SDsuicideprevention.org/data).

The DOH's long-term goal is to continue developing a coalition for infectious disease outbreaks, which builds upon the work done by the DOH during Covid. This means they can be easily prepared for future disease outbreaks in the state. Secretary Magstadt also highlighted the DOH's Bright Start program, which focuses on helping women have healthy pregnancies. The program will start enrolling Medicaid-eligible women in the coming months. Lastly, the DOH highlighted advancement in our EMS (Emergency Medical Service) departments. New installation of telemedicine equipment in ambulances is starting to be available statewide with great success. South Dakota is one of the first states in the nation to do something like this.

The informational slides from the DOH, DHS, and DOE presentations are available on the Legislative Research Council website ([sdlegislature.gov](https://sdlegislature.gov)) under the committee document tab.

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

Thank you!