

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**REGARDING SENATE BILL 2410**

**March 1, 2005**

**Chairman Price, members of the committee, I am Curtis Volesky, with the Medical Services Division of the Department of Human Services. I appear before you today to provide information and support this bill.**

**State law currently provides that Healthy Steps eligibility may be determined by the department of Human Services or by county social service agencies. It does not allow that flexibility for the Medicaid program. It states that eligibility for the Medicaid program must be determined by county social service agencies. The passage of SB 2410 would allow more flexibility in which agency processes Medicaid applications. If passed, eligibility workers located at the central office in Bismarck would be able to determine and authorize both Medicaid and Healthy Steps eligibility when the department receives a joint application. Currently, central office eligibility workers only determine and authorize eligibility for the Healthy Steps program, and refer all Medicaid determinations to the county.**

**Today, central office eligibility workers do not need authority to authorize Medicaid eligibility because Medicaid and Healthy Steps eligibility is maintained on two different systems. However, the department is in the process of updating the Vision system so it will determine eligibility for both programs. We anticipate this project will be completed in June 2005.**

**When the project is completed, an eligibility worker will be required to input pertinent data from the joint application into the system and the system will determine if family members are eligible for either Medicaid or Healthy Steps. If central office eligibility workers are not allowed to authorize Medicaid,**

**applications will have to be forwarded to a county social service office before action can be taken on either program. This process would be both confusing and frustrating to the applicants and workers, and would completely negate the need for any Healthy Steps eligibility determinations at the central office.**

**It makes sense that if the central office eligibility worker receives a joint application and inputs the data into the system, and the system makes an eligibility determination, that the central office eligibility worker should be able to act on that determination without having to send it to the county social service office. This will result in more timely eligibility determinations, as there will be no delay caused by transferring the application.**

**The Department supports this bill and recommends that you consider a do pass for this proposed legislation.**

**I will be happy to respond to any questions you may have.**