

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE BUDGET COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
MEDICAID SYSTEMS PROJECT UPDATE
DECEMBER 14, 2005**

Chairman Dever, members of the committee, I am Maggie Anderson, Director of Medical Services for the Department of Human Services. I appear before you to provide information regarding the Medicaid Systems Project.

During the 2003-2005 biennium, the Department hired a consultant (Fox Systems, Inc.) to assist with the preparation of several documents for the eventual procurement of a new Medicaid Management Information System (MMIS), Pharmacy Point of Sale System (POS), and Decision Support System (DSS). These documents included a Business Requirements Analysis, an Advance Planning Document, a Cost-Benefit Analysis, and a Request for Proposal (RFP).

During the 2005 Legislative Session, the Department was given an appropriation of \$29.2 million to design, develop and implement the replacement Medicaid System, which includes MMIS, DSS, and POS. On June 1, 2005, the Department released a Request for Proposal (RFP), with proposals due September 1, 2005. The Department received one proposal for MMIS, three proposals for Point of Sale, and two proposals for Decision Support. After the proposals were reviewed and scored, the Department held oral presentations with all vendors to further refine the vendors proposals and to ensure the proposals met the business and technology requirements set forth in the RFP. The oral presentations were completed in mid-November and vendors were asked for best and final offers, which were due December 5, 2005.

Frankly, the cost proposals, including the best and final offers, have come in higher than we expected based on the information in the Cost-Benefit Analysis, and we are discouraged. The Cost-Benefit Analysis was prepared with the best

information available at the time. However, significant changes happening within the health care and Medicaid technology arena have affected current and future costs.

First: There have been changes in technology. Medicaid Information Technology Architecture (MITA) was a “concept” within the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) when the Cost Benefit Analysis was created. Today, MITA is evolving and, as a result, cost proposals for all new Medicaid Systems are landing higher than 2 years ago. The newer technology will enable Medicaid systems to be more effective and efficient and will help ensure seamless health care payments between payers. The new technology also results in a “plug and play” approach to maintaining the system, which allows components to be upgraded or replaced rather than an entire system, as a portion becomes obsolete. This is intended to reduce long-term replacement costs. Unfortunately, this has increased the initial development costs, as vendors are making system changes to ensure they can be competitive within the MITA principles.

Second: We are facing a build vs. transfer concept. When the Cost Benefit Analysis was prepared, it was based on estimates for North Dakota transferring a system in from another state. While a transfer is not uncommon, timing of our RFP coincided with the principle MMIS vendors completely rewriting their systems into a new technology. Therefore, we are experiencing a cost increase because of a shift in the technology platforms currently under development.

Based on the Best and Final Offers received from the vendors, ITD’s estimated costs for staff, hardware and software, and DHS project office/support costs, we are faced with an overall projected cost of \$57.3 million dollars (of this \$5.7 million are general funds). We were not expecting a cost at this level. As compared to our original appropriation (\$29.2, of which \$3.7 was general funds), this difference equates to \$28.1 million, of which approximately \$2 million would be general funds.

Other states are facing similar cost proposals:

- **Oregon** **\$53.3 million**
- **Washington** **\$82.5 million**
- **Massachusetts** **\$77.4 million**

That said, the need to replace the existing system has not changed. Our claims processing system is antiquated, difficult and expensive to maintain, and not efficient – for both state users and local providers. Also, as you know, the State Auditors Office continues to have concerns about the ability of MMIS to process claims accurately.

In addition, if we postpone the replacement, it would cost more in the short and long-term. We risk the 90% federal match secured for the replacement project costs. If we delay the project, we would lose the current approval, and have no assurance of future approval. As you may recall from our testimony during the 2005 Session, CMS, the President, and Congress are continually looking at reducing this match to 75%. Providers and clients would also be negatively impacted. The current system does not meet current business needs, let alone the ongoing needs of providers. On a daily basis, our office is faced with providers who are frustrated, angry and fed up with our inability to make changes in the current system to meet their needs. Coupled with the challenges providers have with reimbursement rates, when the providers reach a breaking point, they choose not to provide services, which results in limited access for our recipients. Finally, there is no guarantee that the cost of the system would decrease if the project were postponed. In fact, with inflation, potential Federal match changes, and changing technology, it is likely that the costs would continue to increase.

The Department is committed to this project and has invested considerable resources in this effort. We do recognize that the projected cost is significantly higher double the appropriation; however, the Medicaid systems process over 6 million claims per biennium, totaling over \$1 billion dollars, and it is CRITICAL to the Medical Services Division to be able to fulfill its responsibilities to policy makers, providers, and recipients.

Brenda Weisz, Chief Financial Officer for the Department will be testifying before Budget Section tomorrow regarding the funding of this project. The Department will approach Budget Section for approval for the Information Technology Department to borrow the additional general funds needed for the system development.

I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.