



As we wrap up the 99th Legislative Session, I'm excited to share that we've made significant progress on matters close to South Dakota's heart. Many of the bills we tackled were about helping rural areas and looking out for our most in-need folks. This really shows what sets our state apart—we genuinely look out for one another.

My committee assignments on Education and Health and Human Services were central to the legislation I worked on during the Session.

We saw some big wins for education this Session, like the 4% bump in school funding included in the budget. This increase, which factors in inflation, goes beyond what the law requires. It's a chance for the legislature to give our hardworking educators the recognition they deserve. SB 127 was another move to show teachers they're valued. This bill sets a minimum salary for teachers and holds school districts accountable for how they use state funds. In 2016, the Blue Ribbon Task Force suggested changes to tackle low teacher pay, and the legislature listened. But despite that, salaries haven't kept up, which isn't okay and needs to change. I led SB 127 to its final approval. We also backed our post-high school students by freezing tuition at public universities and tech schools for the third year in a row, encouraging our South Dakota students to stay in-state.

One of the keys to healthy communities is helping people get the care they need close to home. We were able to build on successes from the last Session and continue to streamline the licensing process for four more medical professionals, providing more options for healthcare services in our communities.

Additionally, my proposal to enhance access to eye care by empowering optometrists to perform a limited set of additional procedures while ensuring utmost patient safety has been signed into law. HB 1099 introduces five procedures (including three specific injections, two specific laser procedures,

and Intense Pulsed Light Therapy) into the scope of practice for these community healthcare providers.

This update provides the status of two bills that came out of the Long-Term Care Summer Study: SB 80, which aims to upgrade technology for elderly care providers through \$2 million in available grants from the general fund, and SB 209, which aims to enhance telemedicine technology and ensure patients have improved access to treatment using \$5 million in remaining ARPA dollars. Both bills passed the legislature and have been sent to the Governor.

We'll return to Pierre at the end of the month to finish any remaining work from this Session, lay the groundwork for this year's summer studies, and continue working on issues that weren't resolved during the Session.

Thank you for being so supportive. I appreciate my family, friends, and members of the community who make it possible for me to represent you in Pierre. I value your insights and opinions. Please reach out to me with any questions or concerns at [sydney.davis@sdlegislature.gov](mailto:sydney.davis@sdlegislature.gov). You can also get in touch through my website, [votesydneydavis.com](http://votesydneydavis.com). You'll find information about how our state government works and about visiting our state capitol.