Members of the House Appropriations Committee Human Resources Division

I, Chief Matthew Anderson, representing the Wahpeton Police Department, am submitting testimony in favor of HB 1012 and in support of Avel eCare.

Avel eCare was implemented at our department in May 2024. Our officers utilized Avel eCare during 64% of the mental health calls for service in 2024 and have used it on 100% of the mental health calls for service in January 2025. When used, telehealth crisis care visits through Avel eCare resulted in citizens staying in their homes 66% of the time after the visit concluded.

Avel eCare has provided our officers with immediate access to mental health professionals for citizens when there is not an underlying threat to themselves or others. Of the people in crisis who spoke with a telehealth professional, our officers have only had one call back to the same individual. Additionally, some individuals who used Avel eCare have followed up with our office, thanking us for the service provided and how they were treated when in crisis.

Our department maintains a minimum mandatory staffing of two uniform officers on duty 24/7. Prior to using Avel eCare, officers had to transport a citizen in a mental health crisis to a medical facility outside our community. This process took an officer out of service for a minimum of 2.5 hours and required calling in another officer to cover the shift. Since implementing Avel eCare, we have significantly reduced the need to transport citizens to medical facilities and minimized the need to call in off-duty officers for coverage.

For a small police department with few local services available to us when someone is experiencing a mental health crisis, Avel eCare has been a game changer for our officers and community. I strongly encourage continued support for Avel eCare.

Thank you,

Chief Matthew Anderson

Wahpeton Police Department