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Chairman Nelson and Members of the House Appropriations Committee – Human Resources Division,
My name is Mike Chaussee, Executive Director at North Dakota Assistive the non-profit organization charged with administering the state's Assistive Technology Act program. ND Assistive is committed to helping people thrive despite their limitations. Through many programs, we empower individuals to live independently, gain and keep meaningful employment, succeed in school, and fully engage with their families and communities by helping them discover what's possible through adoption of assistive technology (AT). I am writing to express our support for House Bill 1012. While this testimony addresses our work primarily with Vocational Rehabilitation and Adult and Aging Services, we are also building our relationship with Services to Individuals with Disabilities, the Department of Public Instruction, and we see a path where assistive technology can truly benefit behavioral health services as well.

What I appreciate most about Adult and Aging Services is its vision. The agency constantly explores innovative solutions and takes meaningful action to support the independence and well-being of older North Dakotans. Considering the rapid growth of the aging population in the state, the high rate of dementia, rising costs, a workforce shortage, and an underappreciated stress on unpaid caregivers, the work being done in Adult and Aging Services cannot be supported enough. They understand that aging in place is not just a preference—it is a fundamental component of maintaining dignity and quality of life.

Additionally, ND Assistive works closely with Vocational Rehabilitation. We have noticed a dramatic increase in referrals. Through this partnership, we have successfully helped people with disabilities find and keep meaningful work in their communities benefiting not only the individuals involved, but also their employers and the stress on workforce. Our work together highlights the importance of investing in programs that empower North Dakotans to remain active and engaged.

Continued investment in human services is essential. Expanding access to home and community-based services, enhancing workforce recruitment and retention strategies, and leveraging assistive technology are all necessary steps to meet growing demands in North Dakota. The Human Services Division has already demonstrated remarkable leadership in these areas, but sustained legislative support is crucial to maintaining and expanding these vital services.

Thank you for your time and attention,

Mike Chaussee
Executive Director
North Dakota Assistive