

Testimony
House Bill 1014
January 10, 2025

My name is Julianne Horntvedt, and I serve as the Executive Director of the North Dakota State Council on Developmental Disabilities. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of our Advocacy Committee.

It is our hope that the state will allocate permanent funding for Protection and Advocacy to retain a dedicated staff member focused on Assistive Technology (AT). North Dakota has witnessed firsthand the transformative impact that access to AT can have on individuals with disabilities, enabling them to live more independently and engage fully in their communities. In the last biennium, Protection and Advocacy, in partnership with the DD Council, received a federal grant aimed at addressing the public health workforce crisis. Together, we combined our resources to hire a staff person dedicated to the use and implementation of AT, assisting people in gaining greater independence.

The objective of this initiative was to connect individuals with AT solutions that would empower them to live more independently and reduce their dependence on staff. Importantly, the use of AT is not intended to replace staff, but rather to offer individuals the technology they need to complete tasks independently or maintain their privacy, thereby enhancing their autonomy. The potential cost savings for the state are substantial, and we are hopeful that the continuation of this work through Protection and Advocacy will yield significant benefits.

A permanent staff position dedicated to Assistive Technology is an essential investment in ensuring that individuals with disabilities have the resources they need to thrive. This commitment not only fosters inclusivity, but also strategically enhances the well-being of all North Dakotans.

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