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Senate Appropriations – Human Resources Division

Senator Dick Dever, Chairman

March 17, 2025

Chairman Dever and esteemed Committee Members, my name is Mike Delfs, and I serve as the Chief Executive Officer of Jamestown Regional Medical Center. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the exceptional work hospitals in North Dakota are doing to improve quality, control costs, and provide outstanding care to our citizens.

Thanks in large part to the funding provided by the legislature, our hospitals and healthcare providers consistently deliver exceptional value. In preparing for this testimony, I compared cost and quality data from the Kaiser Family Foundation with the Bailit Health study for the North Dakota Legislative Healthcare Task Force. The results were identical for both cost and quality lending validity to the work by healthcare providers across the state. Both illustrate a vitally important factor affecting cost is our state's smaller population combined with a larger geographic spread. This is true among all of the least populous states in the U.S. Among the ten states with the lowest population, North Dakota ranks as the fourth least populous. More notably, within this comparison group, we rank as the third least costly and the fourth best in quality. In short, North Dakota is achieving some of the best value—high quality care at very low cost—among states with similar population challenges.

This success is no accident. North Dakota healthcare providers are focused on key performance indicators, including:

- Readmission rates
- Preventative care measures (such as mammograms, cervical screenings, and immunizations)
- Management of chronic conditions like diabetes and hypertension
- Fall risk assessments

More specifically, rural and independent hospitals are further strengthening these efforts through collaboration. For example, the Rough Rider High Value Network enables more than 20 hospitals to work together on quality initiatives, standardizing care and outcomes for all North Dakota citizens.

In addition to these quality initiatives, our hospitals are committed to controlling costs. Many of our programs—both quantitative and qualitative—directly lower healthcare costs by keeping our patients healthier. The results of the HCAHPS (Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers) survey mandated by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services further underscores our success. North Dakota hospitals consistently score above national averages in:

- Communication with Nurses
- Communication with Doctors
- Responsiveness of Hospital Staff
- Communication About Medicines
- Cleanliness of the Hospital Environment
- Quietness of the Hospital
- Discharge Information
- Care Transition
- Willingness to Recommend the Hospital

These performance measures confirm that patients are well cared for and are being prepared for a successful transition from inpatient care. By improving patient management through enhanced access, wellness initiatives, and seamless transitions between healthcare settings, hospitals across North Dakota are actively reducing readmissions and preventing the worsening of medical conditions.

Access to specialty care is also a top priority. Rural and independent hospitals, much like larger systems, are dedicated to ensuring that patients can receive specialty services close to home. Jamestown Regional Medical Center is a prime example. By partnering with Sanford Health, Essentia Health, and the VA and independent medical providers, JRMC provides a wide range of services, including:

- Orthopedic Surgery
- Urology
- Otolaryngology
- Podiatric Foot and Ankle Surgery
- Obstetrics & Gynecology
- Anesthetized Pediatric Dentistry

- Ophthalmology
- Advanced Hyperbaric Wound Care
- Oncology
- Rehabilitation Services
- Home Care & Hospice
- Inpatient care along with advanced imaging, laboratory and cardiopulmonary studies

Our approach of combining partnerships, collaboration, and independence increases access to quality healthcare services throughout our region. State funding plays a critical role in elevating care and ensuring that patients in rural areas receive the specialty services they need close to home.

I am also grateful for the legislature's work on enhancing the healthcare workforce. Initiatives such as the Nurse Licensure Compact and the Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) Compact are instrumental in strengthening our provider base and ensuring that quality medical care remains accessible in North Dakota.

In closing, North Dakota hospitals are delivering tremendous value to our state. We appreciate the continued support of this committee and the legislature, which makes our work possible.

Chairman Dever and esteemed Committee Members, I welcome any questions you may have.

Thank you.