



2025 HB 1012
Senate Appropriations – Human Resources Committee
Senator Dick Dever, Chairman
March 18, 2025

Chairman Dever and members of the Senate Human Resources Committee, my name is Joel Larson, I am General Counsel for Altru Health System in Grand Forks, ND. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1012 overall, and specifically Section 6 regarding the investment in behavioral health. I ask that you give this bill a **Do Pass** recommendation.

Altru Health System is based in Grand Forks, N.D. Altru is an independent, non-profit healthcare organization. We are physician-led, with over 300 providers and 65 specialties of care. Altru boasts an acute care hospital, specialty hospital, level II trauma center and twenty practice locations throughout northeast North Dakota and northwest Minnesota, serving a population exceeding 230,000 residents. Altru was the first member of the Mayo Clinic Care Network, extending Mayo Clinic expertise to the patients we serve. Altru employs over 3,500 staff and providers who are empowered to fulfill Altru's mission – making a difference for those we care for.

On January 19, 2025, Altru moved behavioral health operations to an expanded behavioral health hospital increasing available beds from 16 to 24. This is the present capacity in the Northeast North Dakota region for adolescent, adult and geriatric behavioral health needs. Altru has partnered with United Health Services (UHS) for the management of the behavioral health hospital. Through this partnership, it is determined that the need for behavioral health beds in Altru's region exceeds the 24 available beds, with some data supporting a need greater than 60 beds. Because of this greater need, Altru has developed plans for a second phase on the behavioral health hospital to add an additional 24 beds, with an expected opening of the early Fall of 2026.

The first phase of the project to renovate the facility to get to 24 beds was slightly more than \$17 million. Preliminary numbers for phase 2 have come in at \$16.2 million. The requested appropriation follows the lead of the similar appropriation from last session with an 80% state grant and 20% hospital contribution. There is a very real need in the Northeast region as well as the entire state to add behavioral health beds. Altru is ready and willing to increase capacity and to work collaboratively with the NDDHHS staff to meet certain needs for both adolescent and geriatric patients. Furthermore, Altru is well suited with the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences in Grand Forks to work together to grow the psychiatric programs and develop and educate additional students to support the State's needs.

For these reasons, on behalf of Altru Health System, I ask that you give HB 1012, and specifically the appropriation for the behavioral health investment, a **Do Pass** recommendation.

I would be happy to respond to any questions or provide further information if requested. I can be reached at jl Larson@altru.org. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,



Joel Larson
General Counsel, Altru Health System