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Senate Appropriations Committee – Human Resources Division

March 26, 2025

Avele eCare Crisis Care – Support for HB1012

Chairman Dever and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB1012, and the impact of Avele eCare Crisis Care in supporting the citizens of North Dakota.

Avele eCare Crisis Care is a virtual hospital system which has supported hospitals and communities in North Dakota for more than 20 years. During the 2023 session, the legislature passed an appropriation for the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to provide virtual crisis response services for immediate, 24/7 access to behavioral health professionals via telemedicine. In the fall of 2023, Avele eCare was selected through competitive bidding to support the state with Crisis Care - ensuring that citizens in crisis receive timely and appropriate care. From day one, the mission of Crisis Care is to strengthen North Dakota's behavioral health system by supporting first responders, and citizens with virtual crisis intervention, reducing unnecessary emergency room visits and law enforcement involvement while improving patient outcomes.

Through our partnership with the DHHS, law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders across the state, Avele eCare Crisis Care has significantly improved access to crisis mental health care - especially in rural and underserved areas where provider shortages pose a challenge. By leveraging telemedicine, we bring behavioral health expertise to the point of crisis, allowing for real-time assessments, de-escalation, and care coordination with the regional centers, ultimately keeping individuals in their communities whenever possible.

Since expanding our services in North Dakota, we have:

- a. Provided virtual crisis consultations: reducing waiting times for critical mental health evaluations.
- b. Partnered with NDHHS and the Regional Mental Health Centers to ensure that patients in crisis receive care without unnecessary transfers.
- c. Assisted law enforcement by offering immediate access to mental health professionals, reducing the strain on local resources.
- d. Helped divert individuals from unnecessary hospitalization and incarceration by offering community-based crisis stabilization.

Our work aligns with North Dakota's commitment to strengthening behavioral health services and ensuring access to care for all citizens. Continued support for crisis care services, including telemedicine, is essential to addressing workforce shortages, improving patient outcomes, and reducing the financial burden on emergency departments, law enforcement agencies, and ultimately the taxpayers.





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We appreciate the legislature's ongoing leadership in addressing behavioral health needs in North Dakota. Avele eCare Crisis Care is committed to being a strong partner in this effort, and we welcome the opportunity to collaborate further to enhance crisis response services across the state.

Sincerely,

Mark Johnston

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