

Testimony prepared for:  
**Senate Appropriations - HR**  
Name, NDACo  
March 26th, 2025



**Re: HB 1012 – Avel eCare Crisis Care**

Chairman Dever and Committee members, I'm Donnell Preskey with the North Dakota Association of Counties. One of my roles at NDACo is serving as the Executive Director for the ND Sheriffs & Deputies Association (NDSDA). NDSDA is supportive of continuing state funding of the Avel eCare Crisis Care program in North Dakota in HB 1012. This program has been successful in supporting our local law enforcement in responding to crisis situations, especially in areas where they experience a lack of behavioral health services.

Avel eCare Crisis Care is a telemedicine service that provides immediate, 24/7 access to behavioral health professionals, ensuring that citizens in crisis receive timely and appropriate care. When a deputy responds to a call, and they assess that connecting them with a tele-health professional may be a possible solution to de-escalate the situation and provide the individual with the crisis care they may need, they use a tablet or phone to directly connect with a professional right there at their home or wherever the response location may be. Prior to this as a possible solution, the alternative was bringing the individual to jail or an emergency room.

Last session \$2 million was appropriated, that paid for the service to get deployed across North Dakota and included the cost of equipment along with the telehealth service. No local funds were required for Sheriffs Offices to participate, which was a big selling point and a reason the program has been able to spread across the state successfully.

The program not only is a great benefit to the citizens of North Dakota by bringing care to them versus being brought to jail or an ER but it also fills a gap where services are lacking and may be hours away from the nearest jail or hospital. A great majority of the individuals reached are able to stay at home and have a plan to continue with telehealth services.

From 3/24 to 1/25: 45 of 53 counties were utilizing the Avel eCare program with 20 Sheriff's Offices connecting individuals to a telehealth professional in 90 different crisis encounters.

Mr. Chairman, committee members, this program has proven to be a low-cost and effective tool in addressing the mental-health crisis. We strongly encourage you to continue the support for the Avel eCare Crisis Care program.