

Testimony
House Bill 1470 - Department of Human Services
House Human Services Committee
Representative Weisz, Chairman

February 9, 2021

Chairman Weisz, and members of the House Human Services Committee, I am Rosalie Etherington, Superintendent of the North Dakota State Hospital (NDSH) and Chief Clinics Officer of the Human Service Centers, of the Department of Human Services (Department). I am here on behalf of the Department to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1470, if amended.

The regional human service centers have set a prioritized goal to better serve our clients to prevent arrests. Through a set of targeted interventions our clients, over the last year, have experienced a 53% reduction in arrests.

We have also set a prioritized goal to better serve our clients when incarcerated. We provide psychiatric services to clients detained in Cass, Burleigh, Stark, Williams, and Barnes county jails. We seek to expand these services to other jails. Barriers to expansion have included our behavioral health provider shortages, long distances between the human service centers and jails, a lack of space and technology within the jails, and jail medication formularies sometimes excluding antipsychotic medications. Our expanded telehealth services has solved our provider shortage and distance barriers.

Incarceration, without that continued care, results in rapid deterioration, and often hospitalization. We welcome opportunity, in partnership with county jails, to improve access to continued care. For these reasons we support the intent of House Bill 1470.

However, the bill before you does not address situations in which we are not allowed access to an inmate. Moreover, it does not reflect that successful treatment depends

on cooperation from both the Department and the correctional facility. The proposed amendments address those concerns while preserving the bill's intent.

This concludes my testimony and I am happy to answer any questions. Thank you.