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Honorable Members of the U.S. Senate Aging Committee,

I am honored to testify today at this hearing to tell Service Oklahoma's story on how we are improving the accessibility of government services for all Oklahomans.

Home to four million Oklahomans, the state provides vital services to citizens during some of the most important moments in their lives. From obtaining essential documents like birth certificates, driver licenses, vehicle registrations, and professional licenses to facilitating employment opportunities, Oklahomans rely on efficient and responsive government services. However, as we have witnessed, these services often necessitate navigating a labyrinth of agency websites, offices, and phone numbers, a problem magnified during the pandemic when access to these services became more critical than ever. Citizens found themselves waiting on the phone for hours or even camping overnight outside agency offices just to secure their spot in line.

It was clear that a transformation was needed. Service Oklahoma was created by the Oklahoma legislature in May 2022 with a mission to ease citizens' stress in navigating and obtaining government services while providing a great experience. Starting with the stereotypical DMV services, Service Oklahoma took over the administration of the driver license program on November 1, 2022, and the motor vehicle program on January 1, 2023, transferring existing functions and employees from the agencies previously responsible for delivery. Today, we are responsible for seven million transactions that generate almost a billion dollars for the state.

The overarching goal of Service Oklahoma is to create a seamless, consistent experience regardless of whether you visit our website, call our customer support representatives, or come see us at one of our service locations strategically placed in every county in the state. This ambitious initiative is designed to simplify and streamline government services, ensuring accessibility to all Oklahomans. We want to meet Oklahomans where they are, designing services around the citizen, making services easy to understand, available when and where they need them, and being proactive instead of reactive.

While still in our infancy, we have been able to significantly improve our services and launch various new and improved digital products for citizens. There is one that I want to specifically highlight, which also happened to be our first product launch – the disability parking placard, which impacts almost 100,000 Oklahomans each year.

Historically, disabled Oklahomans in need of a Disability Parking Placard were required to complete a 10 step process that often included repeated contact with their approving physician and visits to the Department of Public Safety headquarters located in Oklahoma City.

For Oklahomans outside of the Oklahoma City metro, this step would require them to travel for hours before they had the benefit of the disability parking placard. Once the customer navigated the cumbersome application process, they were left with no means to check on the status of their application while they waited an average of forty-five days to finally receive the disability placard. The process was further complicated by the fact that applications were occasionally lost in the process.

The obstacles created by the original process led to poor customer satisfaction and, in some instances, served as a complete roadblock to Oklahomans' ability to receive government services.

A multi-agency collaborative program was launched by a team now known as Service Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety to reimagine the process for obtaining a disability parking placard in a more customer-centric, digitally oriented, and accessible manner. The team also worked with the Oklahoma Medical Board to engage physicians in the pilot process.

The high-level strategy behind the digital disability placard was to understand existing pain points from the perspective of all stakeholders, especially the customer, and iteratively improve each version of the online product based on surveys and interactions with disabled Oklahomans, employees who processed the applications, and physicians.

The resulting digital disability placard product dramatically improved the experience of all stakeholders involved. Customers now have the option to apply online through an easy-to-find and easy-to-use form, with no in-person visits required. This new application has shortened wait times by almost 90% and eliminated 60% of the steps required by the original process. Customer satisfaction with the new application is high, with customers rating the process a 6.2 out of 7 and applauding the ability to track the application process and ultimately receive their disability placard from the comfort of their homes.

Service Oklahoma represents a profound shift in how Oklahoma's government interacts with its citizens. By focusing on simplicity, accessibility, and efficiency, we are positioning Oklahoma as a leader in providing government services that meet the evolving expectations of our citizens.

In closing, I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to tell our story. Service Oklahoma's journey is a testament to what can be achieved when we prioritize the citizen's needs. We are eager to collaborate, share insights, and work together to unlock the virtual front door to government services for everyone.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to your questions and discussions.