



330 Jay Street
29th Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11201

718.422.4200 (tel)

WWW.HEARTSHARE.ORG

**Testimony of Michelle Roman
Chief External Affairs Officer
Heartshare**

Hearing on Regulation of High-Risk Use of AI in the Non-Profit Sector

New York Senate Standing Committee on Internet and Technology

January 15, 2026

Good morning. My thanks to Chair Gonzalez and the other members of the standing committee for the opportunity to testify today.

I am Michelle Roman, Chief External Affairs Officer for Heartshare, a non-profit that provides supportive services to children and adults with developmental disabilities as well as children and families facing trauma.

Heartshare provides a range of programs, family support services, clinical services, day programming, employment support, and operates residential group homes and supportive apartments to over 2,500 children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We also offer child welfare and family support to over 8,500 children, youth, and families dealing with the trauma related to family separation, including foster care and after-school counseling.

As part of our innovative work to produce the best outcomes for the New Yorkers in our care, Heartshare is currently building a robust Data and AI infrastructure. We are strategic implementors of AI tools and have designed our approach with cutting-edge ethics in mind, supported by our Data and AI Governance and Innovation Committee, a multidisciplinary body with a charter to guide the smart, ethical and safe use of data and AI across our services. This group's work ensures that as we move from pilot to practice, every tool is vetted for bias, accuracy, privacy, and – most importantly – subject to a human-in-charge mandate. We believe that in human services, AI should be the assistant and the human must always be the authority.

We believe that our effective use of this methodology can serve as an example for other private operators across the State, and applaud Senator Gonzalez and her colleagues on the committee for raising awareness about risks and concerns that our staff have also identified as we adopt new technology.

We are focused on using AI where it can do the most good for those who are often left behind the digital divide:

- 1. AI-guided documentation support, which assists foster care caseworkers in drafting and organizing case notes based on information they themselves provide. The goal is for these tools to reduce administrative burden and improve quality of care.**
- 2. Person-Centered GPT, which helps staff locate and summarize existing internal documentation – such as care plans or historical service records – so that they can more quickly understand the full context of an individual’s needs and preferences. This tool summarizes existing human-written records and provides frontline staff more focused time to spend providing personalized care to an individual with a developmental disability.**
- 3. AI with Care, being developed with support from a researcher in AI-ethics, is a field guide in how to support the safe use of AI in the people we support. As AI becomes more ubiquitous, we have a responsibility to guide the vulnerable populations we support with ways to identify sound judgement – whether from humans or AI.**

When we talk about the systems that shape outcomes for youth in foster care or people with disabilities, technology can either reduce barriers or unintentionally reinforce them. Outdated and fragmented systems often increase administrative burden and make it harder for staff to understand a person’s full context.

At Heartshare, we approach artificial intelligence cautiously. We use it only for clearly defined, low-risk support functions, with human oversight at every step, and never for automated decision-making about individual outcomes. Our goal is to ensure that new tools do not replicate existing inequities through technology.

Protecting privacy and respecting consent are central to this work. Our governance framework limits AI use to secure environments, restricts the handling of protected health information, and has led us to decline tools when transparency or appropriate consent could not be assured.

Through thoughtful regulation, careful oversight, and open-minded engagement with the nonprofit sector, we are sure that the benefits of these new algorithmic technologies will extend to all New Yorkers, and help lift up our most vulnerable. Thank you.