

Dear Financial and Taxation Committee,

I am reaching out to encourage support for SB 2149.

I have seen the need for a 24/7/365 988 suicide and crisis phone line many times with the people in our community.

Everyone knows to dial 911 for a medical emergency, it is slowly becoming known throughout North Dakota to dial 988 for behavioral health emergencies. 911 is funded with a telecommunications user fee, this should be no different for 988.

Ten years ago, FirstLink took 1,501 calls directly related to suicide, in 2021 they took 15,465 calls related to suicide, this number went up to 19,000 in 2022. The complexity and volume of their calls have greatly increased. They need to have a diverse and culturally competent workforce and pay their staff professional wages to provide quality service to those reaching out for help. They need updated technology and equipment to make sure that they are ready, willing, and able to answer the 988 and 211 phone lines 24/7/365. SB 2149 would make this all possible.

Thank you

Dave Lund