

Dear Financial and Taxation Committee,

I am reaching out to encourage support for SB 2149.

Working at FirstLink I have seen the need for a 24/7/365 988 suicide and crisis phone line many times. There are so many people out there that need mental health support and should be able to have access to it at any time they need. People know to call 911 for a medical emergency, but who do they call for a behavioral health emergency? We are here providing desperately needed resources to people in a mental health crisis. I would like to believe everyone cares about mental health and suicide risks, so please prove to be apart of that group and support SB 2149.

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.

Again, I want to thank you for your support. Let me know what questions you have about our service or needs.

Thank you,
Kianna Gould
FirstLink