

Dear Financial and Taxation Committee,

I am reaching out to encourage support for SB 2149.

Working as a nurse I have seen the need for a 24/7/365 988 suicide and crisis phone line many times, including.....

Right here in North Dakota and Minnesota. We have lost many dear friends and family to suicide and feel there are many others at risk who need services and that it would make us feel so much better to know there's a lot of services and awareness available studies are showing that our area of the country is having quite its fair share of dealing with this problem and when you start putting faces to it, it is so so sad and unnecessary and this legislation partnered with the additional awareness to for chemical dependency in our state through would really be a nice one two punch and then trying to avoid suicide. And it would make a nice visibility also when partnered with a communication service. It is not just chemical dependency and mental health that make a person suicidal. They are also financial problems etc. which appear to continue to be concerns on the horizon for everyone. I represent to you on behalf of people I know who committed suicide, Tim Gould, or Tom Birkeland, Timmy wick, my uncle Loren Williams.

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.

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

