

Dear Chairman Headland, Vice Chair Hagert, and the Finance and Taxation Committee,

I am writing to encourage you to support SB 2149, the implementation of a 988-user fee. I am writing as the Executive Director of the ND Suicide Prevention Coalition in support of SB2149. We lost our son in 2014 to suicide and I will tell you honestly I did not know where to turn. It truly takes a village to save a child but we need to identify and assist the village.

FirstLink has been a place for consistent messaging for Suicide Prevention in our state for many years, doing what they can given their great budget constraints. I have personally referred not just those people in crisis but also their family members who do not know how to help. I have also had the opportunity to refer physicians who have attended talks and told me they do not know what to do. They get referred to 988 as well. We think our primary care and first responders know what to do but while we had a 43% increase in suicides in the first quarter of 2022 over 2019 and 2020, we have providers that often don't realize the person in the chair is suicidal. Calling FirstLink can give them the tools they need to save lives.

Please help us support all those who reach out for help.

Thank you for your support!

Kora Dockter