



**SB 2149**

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Chair Headland and Members of the Committee: My name is Christopher Scott, I am current President of the North Dakota Student Association, and I am testifying in support of SB 2149, which would allocate funds and establish a 988-suicide hotline in North Dakota.

The North Dakota Student Association is a student organization established in 1969 dedicated to ensuring that students have a voice at the table in policy that affects Higher Education. We consist of delegates from each of the 11 public institutions meeting monthly to engage students in ND Higher Education policy. Our mission is to empower students, create collaboration between the student bodies of the North Dakota public universities, and to give a student perspective on higher education policy.

One of the biggest challenges students face today is mental health. These stem from coming into a college environment where they may feel overwhelmed by work, and classes, particularly during the first semester of college. Some college students may not be able to cope well in this environment, may develop symptoms of depression. Some students may feel too overwhelmed and begin having suicidal ideations on top of the depression. According to a study conducted by the Healthy Minds Network in 2021, 13 percent of college students have had suicidal ideation, 5 percent have made a suicide plan, and 1 percent have attempted suicide.

In the last few years, the NDSA has recognized the issue of mental health and how it affects students attending NDUS colleges. During the 2020-2021 academic year, the NDSA passed [NDSA-14-2021](#), which was a resolution in support of creating a mental health care provider registry, which was SB 2161 during North Dakota's 67<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session. Last year, the

NDSA passed [NDSA-12-2122](#), a resolution supporting the prioritization of mental health programs and funding for the North Dakota University System.

Going into the legislative session, one of the NDSA's legislative priorities is increasing access to student mental health resources. The NDSA this year, has passed [NDSA-13-2223](#), which a resolution that supports this specific bill. This bill directly addresses mental health issues not only that college students face, but the community as a whole. And so, the NDSA supports SB 2149 and would ask for a DO PASS recommendation on this bill.