



March 13, 2023

RE: SB 2149

Dear House Finance & Taxation Committee:

The members of the Broadband Association of North Dakota are opposed to the funding source for SB 2149. We do not believe this service should be paid for through a tax on telephone lines.

1. There is no historical cost information for this program to support or justify the \$.30 fee.
2. Voice services customers already pay numerous other fees and taxes. This is not comparable to 911 services that have the additional burden of having to have a system to track caller location and provide it to emergency service providers. The 988 system does not utilize geolocation.
3. This program should have to submit an annual operating budget to Health and Human Services to be approved and then funded through normal appropriations. Without a budget and knowing the operating costs the collection of this fee will just give them money to spend without appropriate checks and balances to make sure it is being used wisely and not just spent each year to justify collecting more.
4. The prepaid wireless exemption could present problems. All voice services are technically prepaid. When you get a bill for phone services you are paying in advance for the service period.
5. Those in need of 988 services can also reach experts online through chat or mobile messenger. This service is not exclusive to a phone call.

We are supportive of the service that the 988 Suicide Prevention Hotline can provide those in need but believe it should be funded through an appropriation of general funds and not a special tax targeted exclusively at those with phone plans.

Thank you for your time and I'm happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carissa M. Swenson".

Carissa Swenson
Executive Director
BAND