

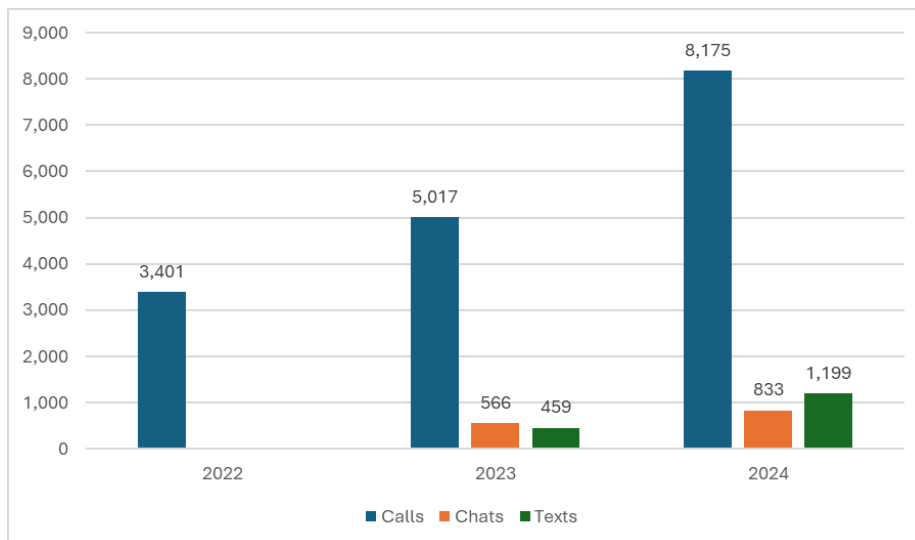
Chairman Nelson and Members of the House Appropriation Committee – Human Resource Division,

My name is Jennifer Illich, and I am the Executive Director of FirstLink. I am in favor of House Bill 1012, I urge you to continue and even increase funding for FirstLink. FirstLink has funding in this bill to support

- Answering the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline
- 211 Information and Referral Helpline
- Screen, triage and deploy mobile crisis
- Providing follow-up calls for suicide prevention through our Care and Support Program
- Answering calls to the National Gambling Helpline from North Dakota seeking assistance
- collaborating with 911 to handle behavioral health-related calls efficiently

These services are all provided 24/7/365.

We are witnessing an **alarming and growing demand** for crisis support. **Every month, more North Dakotans** are reaching out—by call, chat, or text—desperate for guidance, reassurance, and immediate intervention. The need for these services is undeniable.



Budget Needs & Accountability

Payroll-related expenses account for approximately **80% of our total budget**, reflecting our service-oriented mission and reliance on highly trained personnel.

At FirstLink, we are **deeply committed to transparency and fiscal responsibility**. We take a **conservative** approach to spending, ensuring that every dollar is used efficiently to **maximize our impact** while keeping overhead costs minimal.

Your support directly translates into **saving lives** and **strengthening the mental health safety net** for our communities. We ask for your continued investment in FirstLink so that we may **expand our reach** and **serve those who need us most**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

FirstLink Annual Budget Needs

Equipment Maintenance Supp	1,000
Postage	1,800
Postage Meter Rental	2,200
Employee Recruitment Fees	5,000
Copier Lease	5,500
Training Seminars	7,000
Travel	7,500
Dues - Organizational Mem	11,000
Simple IRA Employer Exp	12,500
Required General Liability	15,000
Technology	50,000
Office Supplies	27,350
Education Awareness	11,000
Telephone/Internet/Technology	71,600
Program Expense	79,000
Professional Fees; bookkeeping, HR, technology management fees	103,500
Office Rent	161,000
Medical Plan Premiums	165,000
Payroll Taxes Expense	175,000
Payroll	1,917,057
TOTAL EXPENSE	2,829,007.00

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Sincerely,
Jennifer Illich
Executive Director, FirstLink