

Dear Members of the Industry and Business Committee,

Hello, my name is Kiergon, and I'm currently attending university in North Dakota. I am currently writing to share my strong support for SB 2200. In today's age, the availability of mental health support is something that deeply impacts my generation. For many people my age, the ability to text or chat with the 988 crisis hotline is just as important, if not more, than being able to call in. These options allow those who might feel uncomfortable speaking on the phone, or those in situations where privacy is a concern, to get the support they need. I personally know friends who would never have reached out for help without the text or chat options, and I worry that without proper funding, these critical services could be limited or unavailable.

The demand for 988 services is growing, and we need to make sure that text and chat options are fully supported to meet the needs of all North Dakotans, especially for young people who rely on these resources. Securing adequate and consistent funding for the program will allow the hiring of more staff, improvements in infrastructure, and timely responses for anyone seeking help, no matter how they choose to reach out. Without this funding, we risk leaving some of the most vulnerable people without support in their darkest moments. Supporting SB 2200 is an investment in ensuring that no one has to face a mental health crisis alone, no matter how they choose to connect for help.

Thank you for considering this important legislation. I urge you to vote in favor of SB 2200 and help make sure that the 988 crisis hotline can continue to save lives and provide hope to everyone in our state.

Sincerely,

Kiergon Wilkins