

**Subject:** Support SB 2200 – Strengthening the 988 Crisis Hotline Program

Dear Members of the Industry and Business Committee,

I am Barb Hanson and I'm writing to express my strong support for SB 2200. As a loss survivor, suicide prevention advocate, and faith community nurse, I have seen firsthand the devastating impact that a mental health crisis can have on individuals, families, and entire communities. I have also witnessed the power of resources like the 988 suicide and crisis lifeline in offering hope and saving lives.

For those of us who have experienced loss, the importance of having accessible, compassionate crisis support cannot be overstated. The 988 suicide and crisis lifeline has become a lifeline for so many, providing free and confidential help for individuals in their darkest moments. As someone who works closely with my faith community, I know how vital this resource is, especially for those who may feel isolated or stigmatized when facing mental health challenges.

However, as demand for 988 services grows, we must act to ensure it can meet the needs of all North Dakotans. This includes:

- Funding the addition of more full-time employees to handle increasing call volumes.
- Supporting text and chat options to reach younger individuals and those who may feel more comfortable communicating in these ways.
- Investing in infrastructure upgrades to improve response times and ensure effective support.

Without adequate funding, we risk losing this critical safety net for those in crisis. Supporting SB 2200 is more than a policy decision—it is a commitment to saving lives, reducing stigma, and ensuring that no one has to face a crisis alone.

Thank you for your consideration and for your dedication to the well-being of all North Dakotans. I urge you to vote in favor of SB 2200 and help ensure the 988 crisis hotline remains a strong and reliable resource for our state.

With hope and gratitude,

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