

Dear Members of the Industry and Business Committee,

My name is John Illich, and I am writing to you **not just as a concerned North Dakota resident but as a father who worries every day about the pressures our kids face.** Suicide is the second leading cause of death among individuals aged 10 to 24 in our state—a heartbreaking and preventable tragedy.

From 2004 to 2021, the youth suicide rate in North Dakota rose by over 46%, and from 2018 to 2021, there was a 33% increase in suicide ideation and attempts among young people. **As a parent, those numbers keep me awake at night. Every one of them represents a life lost or a child struggling in silence.**

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline has been a beacon of hope, offering free, confidential support through calls, chats, and texts to those in crisis. **These multiple communication options ensure that individuals—especially young people—can reach out in the way they feel most comfortable.** But as the need for these services grows, we must ensure the lifeline is funded to operate 24/7 and meet the increasing demand. **Without this critical support, our kids could be left without anyone to turn to during their darkest moments.**

Supporting SB 2200 isn't just about policy—it's about saving lives and giving parents like me hope that our children will always have help when they need it most. I urge you to vote in favor of this bill and help ensure every young person in North Dakota has a lifeline to hold on to—whether it's through a call, chat, or text.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Together, we can protect our kids and build a safer, stronger future for all families in our state.

Sincerely,

John Illich

John Illich
Concerned parent