

Dear Chair Barta and Members of the Industry and Business Committee,

As a passionate mental health advocate, I strongly urge your support for SB 2200 to ensure the continued and increased funding of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

This vital service provides free, confidential, and lifesaving support to North Dakotans. FirstLink's reports of increasing call, chat, and text volumes underscore a growing and urgent need. Suicide remains a leading cause of death in our state, with over 130 lives lost in 2021—a sobering statistic that exceeds the national average.

Sustained funding is not just a necessity; it is a lifeline for addressing mental health crises, particularly in rural areas where access to resources is often limited. Ensuring these services remain available and adequately funded sends a clear message: no one in crisis must face their struggles alone.

Thank you for your consideration and for supporting this critical initiative.

Sincerely,
Aleyna Leibfried