

**Dear Chairman Barta and Members of the Industry and Business Committee,**

As someone who has faced addiction struggles and personally understands the importance of accessible mental health resources, I strongly urge your support for SB 2200 to ensure the continued and increased funding of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

When I was at my lowest, I know how isolating and hopeless it can feel. Services like the 988 Lifeline are a beacon of hope for people who believe they have nowhere to turn. The free, confidential, and lifesaving support it provides is vital for countless North Dakotans, especially those in rural areas where access to mental health resources is scarce.

The rising call, chat, and text volumes reported by FirstLink are evidence of a growing crisis in our state. Suicide continues to take too many lives—over 130 in 2021 alone—surpassing the national average.

[Health and Human Services North Dakota](#)

Moreover, North Dakota faces significant challenges related to substance use disorders. In 2021, approximately 20.5% of adults in the state experienced any mental illness, and 8.9% had a substance use disorder.

[Health and Human Services North Dakota](#)

Sustained funding for the 988 Lifeline is not just a financial commitment; it is a promise that no one has to face their darkest moments alone. It is an investment in hope and healing for people who are struggling and for the communities who support them.

Thank you for your time and for considering this critical initiative. Your support could mean the difference between life and death for someone in crisis.

Sincerely,

Terry Lausch