

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

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. First Link's reports of increasing call, chat, and text volumes underscore a growing and urgent need, a 59 % increase in calls from 2023-2024 which means more people are reaching out for help. First Link call professionals provide help and hope.

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.

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

Sincerely,

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