



NORTH DAKOTA

Family Alliance LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2200

Mark Jorritsma, Executive Director
North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action
January 20, 2025

Dear Chairman Barta and honorable members of the Senate Industry and Business Committee,

My name is Mark Jorritsma and I am the Executive Director of North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action. I am testifying on behalf of our organization in support of Senate Bill 2200 and respectfully request that you render a “DO PASS” on this bill.

SB 2200 would support funding for a 988 crisis hotline focused on suicide prevention and responding to mental health crises. Our organization recognizes that mental health and suicide prevention through mechanisms like a hotline are important, however, we would assert that this hotline is not simply just important, it is *critical* for North Dakota.

Using the most recent official data available, North Dakota is the state with the 5th highest suicide rate in the nation!¹ The story is just as bad when we look at alcohol abuse. North Dakota is current ranked #1 in DUI rates, and it has the 5th highest alcohol consumption per capita in the country.² We have significant issues and solving them is complex and generally takes long-term solutions. That is great, but what if the situation is more urgent?

If a drunk driver kills a person, has a dangerous mental break with reality, attempts suicide, or is trying to deal with a similar life-threatening crisis, no long-term solution will help them in that moment. They need immediate urgent intervention, and that is what the 988 hotline can provide.

Speaking personally, my wife’s and my own extended families and friends have had to deal with individuals who have committed suicide, have life-crippling mental health issues, and fight daily with substance abuse problems. I doubt that our family is a dramatic outlier in this respect. This is not an abstract problem, it’s real and needs to be addressed.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/suicide-mortality/suicide.htm>

² <https://quotewizard.com/news/americas-booziest-states>

There is ample evidence that crisis hotlines can greatly improve outcomes addressing these issues in urgent situations, and they can also serve as an entry point to more long-lasting care. For these reasons, North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action requests that you render a “DO PASS” on Senate Bill 2200. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony, and feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Mark Jorritsma
Executive Director
North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action