

**Testimony in support of SB 2200**

Senate Industry and Business Committee

Moriah Opp, suicide prevention advocate

January 20, 2025

Chairman Barta and members of the Industry and Business Committee,

My name is Moriah Opp, and I am writing to express my support for SB 2200. In my ten years of experience working in suicide prevention at the local, state, and federal level, I know firsthand the importance of dedicated, sustainable funding and how it can impact the quality of and access to behavioral health crisis services.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), who oversees the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, just released the National Guidelines for a Behavioral Health Coordinated System of Crisis Care on January 15<sup>th</sup> of this year. In these updated guidelines, SAMHSA frames out requirements for 988 Lifeline & Other Behavioral Health Lines including accreditation processes and required training, effective coordination with other community resources, 988-911 coordination, 988 coordination with mobile crisis, coordination with service referrals, and data/quality improvement standards. Dedicated 988 funding ensures that North Dakota's 988 Lifeline can meet all the extensive requirements stated previously and for any further requirements sure to come.

The need for crisis support has grown steadily each year and will likely continue to rise as awareness of 988 expands. Suicide remains a leading cause of death in our state-184 people died by suicide in 2022 (NDVDRS data), and 14,120 Lifeline contacts made via FirstLink last year (<https://myfirstlink.org/data/>). Sustainable and dedicated 988 funding means that North Dakotans in crisis can receive support from someone local any time of day or night, 365 days a year.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge you to vote in favor of SB 2200 to ensure that the 988 Lifeline can meet the needs of all North Dakotans in crisis.

Sincerely,

Moriah Opp, Grand Forks, ND

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