

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

It is of utmost importance to support SB 2200 to ensure the continued and increased funding of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

There are many North Dakotans who benefit from this service. This support service is key to providing efficient appropriate care that would otherwise usurp other healthcare services that are less appropriate. When this service isn't available, there can be an increase in 911/EMS calls that use up those services as well as law enforcement and visits to emergency rooms.

Maintaining the 988 lifeline provides free, confidential, and lifesaving support to North Dakotans. This lifeline can provide an understanding voice during times of crisis and can support a person through this critical time, followed up by directing them to appropriate mental health care.

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 has to face their struggles alone.

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

Sincerely,  
Lisa Thorp, RN

ND resident