

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

As a school counselor and mental health advocate, I strongly urge your support for SB 2200 to ensure the continued and increased funding of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Every day, I witness the challenges young people and families face in managing mental health struggles. The 988 Lifeline provides free, confidential, and lifesaving support to North Dakotans of all ages, serving as a critical resource for those who feel overwhelmed or isolated. FirstLink's reports of increasing call, chat, and text volumes highlight the growing need for these services in our communities.

Suicide is a leading cause of death among young people in North Dakota. Between 2004 and 2021, the suicide rate among individuals aged 10 to 24 increased by 46.2%, rising from 11.9 to 17.5 per 100,000 population. Additionally, there was a 33% increase in suicide ideation and attempts among this age group between 2018 and 2021.

[NORC at the University of Chicago](#)

Sustained funding for the 988 Lifeline is essential. For many students and families, this service is a bridge to hope and healing, ensuring they have someone to turn to in moments of crisis.

By supporting SB 2200, you are not only addressing a pressing need but also making a profound statement about the value of mental health and the well-being of our community.

Thank you for your leadership and for considering this critical initiative.

Respectfully,

Robin Nein

School Counselor West Fargo Public Schools