

Dear Members of the Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Bill SB 2145. My name is Ashley Lemke, and I serve as the Director of Workforce and Culture at FirstLink. FirstLink is proud to be a cornerstone of our community, answering the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and the 211 Information and Referral Helpline. Every day, our team answers calls, texts, and chats, helping individuals in crisis develop safety plans to prevent suicide and save lives.

The passage of SB 2145 is crucial to ensuring the safety and well-being of the individuals who staff these lines. By granting immunity to our team members, this bill would help protect the essential and often life-saving work that we do each day. At FirstLink, we uphold the highest standards in the field, adhering to best practices as outlined by our national accreditations from the American Association of Suicidology (AAS) and InformUSA. We also follow the research-based guidelines established through the Network Agreement, created in partnership with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and Vibrant Emotional Health. These standards ensure that our team operates with the utmost professionalism and care in every interaction.

Providing legal immunity for those doing this work is a necessary step to ensure that our team members can continue to provide support with confidence and security. It not only protects those working on the front lines but also upholds the integrity and trust of the services we provide to those in need.

I strongly urge your support for SB 2145. This bill will ensure the continued success of FirstLink and similar organizations, allowing us to continue providing these lifesaving services to the communities we serve.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and dedication to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Ashley Lemke
Director of Workforce and Culture, FirstLink