

Dear Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Bill SB 2145. My name is Karen Nitzkowski, a North Dakota resident and former West Fargo School Board Member. I am writing to emphasize the importance of this legislation in safeguarding critical services such as the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and the 211 Information and Referral Helpline.

FirstLink and similar programs play a crucial role in our community by providing immediate assistance to individuals facing crises. These services, delivered through phone calls, texts, and chats, often serve as a lifeline for those in need of support, ensuring they are not alone in their darkest moments.

SB 2145 is vital to protecting the professionals who perform this essential work. By granting them immunity, we ensure they can continue serving the community without unnecessary legal concerns. These services are conducted according to evidence-based guidelines and best practices outlined by SAMHSA and Vibrant Emotional Health, which guarantee the highest level of care for those reaching out for help.

This legislation is about protecting individual workers and ensuring that these life-saving resources remain reliable and accessible. Supporting SB 2145 demonstrates North Dakota's dedication to improving mental health and protecting those who provide critical care to our communities.

I encourage you to vote in favor of SB 2145 to secure the future of these indispensable services and the well-being of the individuals who rely on them.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Karen Nitzkowski

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