

Dear Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Bill SB 2145. My name is Tamara Kelly, and I am a mental health advocate. I am writing to highlight the critical importance of this legislation in supporting life-saving services like the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and the 211 Information and Referral Helpline.

Organizations like FirstLink are essential to the well-being of our communities, providing vital support to individuals in moments of crisis. The passage of SB 2145 is necessary to protect these services by granting immunity to the professionals who dedicate themselves to answering calls, texts, and chats from those in need.

These services are built on evidence-based practices and adhere to the rigorous standards outlined in the Network Agreement, developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and Vibrant Emotional Health. Such measures ensure that every person in crisis receives compassionate and professional care of the highest quality.

Granting immunity to those staffing these helplines is about more than protecting the individuals doing this crucial work. It ensures the stability, trust, and continuity of the services that so many people rely on during their most vulnerable moments. Passing this legislation reflects a commitment to prioritizing mental health and the safety of our community members.

I strongly encourage you to vote in favor of SB 2145 to help ensure that organizations like FirstLink can continue their mission of saving lives and providing invaluable support to our communities.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter and for your dedication to improving the lives of North Dakotans. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or need further information.

Sincerely,

Tamara Kelly