



*Mental Health Minnesota is the voice of lived mental health experience.*

*We carry that declaration forward as we work to advance mental health and well-being for all, increase access to mental health treatment and services, and provide education, resources and support across Minnesota.*

Dear Chair Lieblich and Members of the House Health Finance and Policy Committee,

I'd like to express my support of HF2930, the Department of Health Budget Bill, with a particular focus on the portion of the bill related to establishment and funding of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline's new 3-digit number launched last July, transitioning the former 1-800-273-TALK phone number. The new number is intended to be easy to remember, similar to how people can dial 911 for medical emergencies. Since switching to 988 on July 16, calls to Minnesota's four call centers have increased 44%. Minnesota has also seen a 173% increase in web chats (since January 2022) and 250% increase in texts to 988.

Crises are typically de-escalated on the call, with less than 2% of Lifeline calls engaging emergency services or mobile crisis response. However, it is critical that calls to 988 from Minnesotans be answered in our own state so that connections to local resources and mobile crisis response can be made as needed. We have worked hard and invested in building out our mobile crisis system in Minnesota, but a person who needs that level of response won't get it if their call is answered in another state.

Short-term federal funding has helped our 988 lifeline centers in Minnesota build capacity to meet the increased need and answer a much higher number of calls in-state. The in-state answer rate nearly doubled in between 2021 and 2022, from just 43% in 2021 to 83% in 2022. However, this is not ongoing funding, and there is a need to create a stable and sustainable funding model to support the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline in Minnesota long-term.

The MDH funding bill creates that funding model with a small telecom fee for landline and cell phones. The proposed fee would be not lower than 12 cents per month and no higher than 25 cents per month, and would be used to create and maintain a statewide 988 suicide prevention crisis system.

The National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020, federal legislation that designated 988 as the three-digit number for mental health and suicidal crises, allows states to use a 988 fee for the crisis centers operations and related services. The broad allowable use of these fees reflects reality: our mental health system across the country is far behind any emergency response to a physical health condition, and we need to address mental health crisis with appropriate expertise and resources.

However, we also ask that the committee consider an investment of \$8 million from the current budget surplus for FY24 to allow our Lifeline centers to continue to build capacity as telecom fees are established and collection begins. Our Lifeline centers have made great progress in expanding to meet need, and we don't want to lose ground or revert back to having a large number of calls from Minnesota answered outside our state.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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