



N A S W
National Association of Social Workers
MINNESOTA CHAPTER

Representative Peter Fischer, Chair
Human Service Policy
February 20, 2023

Chair Fischer and Human Service Policy Committee Members,

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, MN Chapter (NASW - MN), we are writing in support of House File 1566, a bill supporting the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline with sustainable funding.

NASW - MN is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in our state, representing nearly 2000 social workers. Our organization includes Licensed Independent Clinical Social Workers (LICSW), the largest group of mental health providers in Minnesota. We offer experience and expertise in mental health practice.

Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among young people, and the 10th leading cause of death overall. We know that for every person that dies by suicide, another 316 seriously consider it. NASW-MN believes our community is best served by a whole-person approach to health that includes emergency mental health support for those in crisis.

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is designed to be more accessible because it is easy to remember and in fact, we are seeing immediate effectiveness. Since launching in July, calls to Minnesota's four call centers have increased by 44%. Minnesota has also seen a 173% increase in web chats since January, 2022, and 250% increase in texts to 988.

It's important that we respond to 988 calls locally so that we can effectively connect the caller to resources in Minnesota. HF1566 creates a stable funding stream to maintain this mental health resource after federal funds expire. The proposed telecom fee for landline and cell phones would be between 12 and 25 cents per month. In a 2021 report from NAMI National, nearly three-quarters of adults surveyed — 73% — would be willing to pay a monthly fee on phone bills to support the 988 system.

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is an important mental health resource for Minnesotans. Please support HF1566. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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