



March 15, 2023

Dear Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee:

We write in support of Senate File 2588 for Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Establishment and Appropriation.

At Greater Twin Cities United Way, our mission is to build pathways toward prosperity and equity for all, touching over 500,000 lives across the 9-county metro area. We fund over 95 direct service organizations and coalitions through grantmaking across our three impact areas of Educational Success, Household Stability and Economic Opportunity. We know that one of the biggest drivers of economic stability and overall well-being for residents in the 9-county metro area includes access to crisis resources and mental health support offered 24 hours a day.

Steady funding for 988 is critical so the four Lifeline centers serving Minnesotans, including Greater Twin Cities United Way, can continue to maintain high quality operations and ensure MN has locally based services. Since the transition from NSPL to 988, calls have increased 25-30%, as well as an expansion of scope to include substance use and other mental health crises. Supplemental funding will support this expanded scope as well as continue to ensure Lifeline centers can continue to provide crisis support for people who are considering ending their lives.

988 and its work must be placed in a separate category that is exempt from state budget cuts. Supporting this bill will allow Lifeline centers to provide crisis support services to marginalized communities that do not have access to mental health resources. Additional funding will also increase capacity by adding more staff and improving technology which allows crisis responders to provide better services to each caller. Competitive compensation for suicide prevention call specialists is imperative for recruitment and retention. In addition, training opportunities are needed to ensure quality services and professional development is sustained. Consistent funding for 988 will allow us to continue supporting our community in times of crisis.

Thank you,

Susan Carter, Director, Advocacy & External
Engagement
Greater Twin Cities United Way

Tina Rucci
Advocacy Manager
Greater Twin Cities United Way