



Minnesota Psychiatric Society

Improving Minnesota's mental health care through education, advocacy, and sound psychiatric practice, and achieving health equity.

February 20, 2023

Dear Human Services Policy Committee,

The Minnesota Psychiatric Society (MPS) strongly supports creation of sustainable funding for the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline with a telecommunications fee. MPS represents over 400 psychiatrists practicing in communities throughout the state.

Every year in the U.S., more people die by suicide than in car accidents. 777 Minnesotans died by suicide in 2021, and it is estimated that more than 245,000 Minnesotans seriously considered suicide in 2021.

988 can be a life-saving resource for the hundreds of thousands of Minnesotans who contemplate suicide every year. Since 988 launched in July 2022, Minnesota has seen a 44% increase in calls, a 173% increase in web chats, and a 250% increase in texts to 988. Short-term federal funding has allowed Minnesota call centers to accommodate this increase.

Without sustainable state funding, there is a risk that Minnesotans who call 988 would speak to a person in a different state who would not know the critical local resources. Worse, without sustainable funding, there is a risk of reverting to the problem before 988 where callers to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline would remain on hold for long periods or sometimes not have their call ever answered. Minnesotans who are suicidal should not be at risk of having their calls for help left unanswered.

HF1566 creates a sustainable funding model with a telecommunication fee for landline and cell phones between 12-25 cents per month, a lower fee cap than what has passed in most other states with this legislation. A 2021 survey showed that 73% of adults surveyed would be willing to pay a telecommunication fee to support 988.

MPS urges the Human Services Policy Committee to ensure that Minnesotans have continued access to this invaluable, life-saving service by securing this long-term funding. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us or our lobbyist, Bill Amberg (651-260-9973).

Sincerely,

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Kruse'.

Matt Kruse, MD, FAPA
MPS President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Trangle'.

Michael Trangle, MD, DLFAPA
MPS Legislative Chair