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Chairman Finch, and Members of the House Committee on Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications,

My name is Roxanne Van Gundy, and I am the current President of the Kansas Chapter of NENA (National Emergency Number Association) and the Director of Lyon County Emergency Communications Center in Emporia.

Like all Kansas counties, our community has struggled with mental health issues and suicides. Addiction, job loss and the pandemic have created a new critical level of need that we see in every call we take in our center. For my region, our current provider is responsible for services in 7 Kansas counties. It's easy to be spread too thin. It is also incredibly difficult in a smaller, rural areas to overcome the stigma of reaching out for help from someone you possibly know in your community.

Implementing 988 is a crucial step in combating the mental health crisis in Kansas. I am confident that it will help with creating a uniform process for assessment by trained mental health professionals. This is long overdue and will have a dramatic impact in our state.

Kansas 911 supports HB2281, however we are neutral on this legislation. Our industry is fearful that 988 is planning to impose a fee on telecommunication devices and other services that will directly compete with funding for 911. The sacrifice of one service to fund another will only short change the citizens of Kansas in their most critical times of need. Our 911 centers are already grappling with limits in their funding. Asking them to continue to do more with less does Kansas's a disservice.

911 is the emergency number that people know, and we look forward to having a strong relationship with the 988 community for years to come. We are hopeful that our relationship with 988 will only benefit our citizens in giving them access to trained mental health professionals when they need it.

In closing, we welcome any opportunity to work with the sponsors of HB2281 to address the issues raised in my testimony. The 911 industry looks forward to the successful implementation of 988 services in Kansas and throughout the country to help our citizens in crisis.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on this issue.

Warm regards,

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