



STATE OF KANSAS
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

DEREK SCHMIDT
ATTORNEY GENERAL

MEMORIAL HALL
120 SW 10TH AVE., 2ND FLOOR
TOPEKA, KS 66612-1597
(785) 296-2215 • FAX (785) 296-6296
WWW.AG.KS.GOV

Neutral testimony on House Bill 2281
An act concerning public health; establishing 988 as the suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline in Kansas

By Gina Meier-Hummel, LMSW
Kansas Youth Suicide Prevention Coordinator

February 22, 2021

Chair Landwehr and Members of the Committee:

Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for Kansas youth. In 2019, the Kansas Legislature created the Youth Suicide Prevention Coordinator position housed within the Attorney General's office (K.S.A. 75-772). Since this time, we have been working diligently to address the public health concern of youth suicide. This work, has included collaborating with our partners in other state agencies, as well as the private sector, to draw attention to prevention and intervention efforts and needs.

In October 2020, the federal government adopted Public Law 116—172, or the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act. The Federal Communications Commission adopted rules to establish 988 as the new, nationwide 3-digit phone number for Americans in crisis to connect with mental health crisis counselors. Our office supports this important effort and believes the implementation of the 988 crisis line will save Kansas lives.

On a related matter, our office is currently seeking funding through the appropriations process for the creation of a mobile app focusing on youth suicide prevention. This app will make it easy for our young people, who may not want to call and ask for help, to be able to access help via their mobile devices. We see these two efforts working in concert with each other, with the sole purpose of making it easy for individuals to call, text or access help through their mobile devices. We, along with others, are part of the advisory board working on 988 implementation in Kansas. Our collaboration will ensure that these efforts are not redundant, yet remain robust in order to reduce suicide in Kansas. We envision that both systems will work together and enhance the system of response we currently have in place for all populations that need this assistance.

Thank you again for your consideration of House Bill 2281.