



LAURA KELLY, Governor • KATHY KECK, Chairperson • STEVE GIEBER, Executive Director

*"To ensure the opportunity to make choices regarding participation in society
and quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities"*

Feb. 15, 2022

Chairwoman Landwehr and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to write to you today. My name is Liz Long Policy Analyst for the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities (KCDD). The Council is made up of self-advocates, family members, state agencies, and our partners identified in the Federal Developmental Disabilities Act. Federal and state laws created the Council to advise policymakers on issues that impact people with disabilities and their families as well as carryout activities that increase Self-Advocacy, Systems Change, and Capacity Building.

The Council is writing you today in support of HB 2281, to establish and implement 988 as the suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline in Kansas.

Having crisis care available 24/7 via call centers with mobile crisis teams and stabilization programs across all of Kansas is a crucial support needed by all Kansans, but especially beneficial to persons with IDD. People with disabilities when having a crisis would benefit greatly having a place to call when they are having a difficult time coping. the ability to have a response team come in person to support them during those moments would reduce law enforcement involvement significantly. This would free officers to address true criminal activity and reduce the risk of negative interactions (physical harm and trauma) between the person with IDD and the officers. This will also lessen the number of persons with disabilities who end up in jail or correctional facilities, which are ill equipped for protecting someone with IDD.

When reaching a crisis point, often persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) will experience someone calling 911 to manage the intense behaviors that can occur when the person is not able to communicate their frustration or calm themselves. Once law enforcement arrives what they see is someone out of control and not able to respond to their verbal commands. They do what they are trained to do, control the situation. This often results in the person with IDD being restrained, arrested, and physically harmed. Once in custody the situation then requires ever increasing resources either in the form of emergency room services and/or jail and correctional facility staff. After all this disruption and trauma is complete many times the person identified as unable to stand trial via a competency evaluation. They then return home with no new supports in place so that the cycle can continue the next time.

Having the support behind 988 will reduce the fear family and support staff have of calling for help when they need it the most. Having the option to call a trained mental health profession to assist any time a person with IDD is having a crisis will allow families or staff to feel there is good option to get help for the person and keep everyone safe.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony for you today.

Respectfully,
Liz Long
Policy Analyst
Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities



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DD Act Values: Independence, Productivity, Integration, Capacity Building, Self-Determination & Inclusion in Community, Free from Abuse, Neglect & Exploration

KCDD Values: Person-Centered, Impactful Outcomes, Respectful, Collaborative, Innovative, Equitable Opportunity