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25 March 2022

Chair Tina Liebling
House Health Finance and Policy Committee

Via: e-mail

Ref: HF 4398 Telecommunications Service Surcharge

Dear Chair Liebling,

On behalf of the Minnesota Telecom Alliance (MTA), I am writing in oppose lines 56.26 through 57.12 of House File 4398. MTA believes this is too important of an issue to impose a regressive tax on telecommunications customers to address the societal issue of suicide prevention. This function should be funded from the General Fund.

The MTA membership is a mix of family-owned companies, cooperatives, privately held companies, and publicly traded companies. While MTA members have many different corporate structures, one thing we have in common is our commitment to serving Minnesota.

Many MTA members have been touched by suicide in one form or another. We know first-hand how devastating it can be on families and communities. Our members implemented 988 service in our networks as soon as it was ready to go. We had the 988 Coordinator from the MN Department of Health speak at our Fall Conference. We will continue to do whatever we can to promote 988 and do everything possible to prevent suicides in our State.

A societal issue as important and ubiquitous as suicide prevention should be the responsibility of ALL Minnesota taxpayers rather than a hidden, regressive tax on telecom customers alone. For this reason, we respectfully request that 988 telecommunications service surcharge language be stricken. Instead, please have this important duty funded from the General Fund.

Cordially,

Brent J. Christensen
President/CEO