

My name is Parker Sczepanik and I am the Outreach Specialist for the YouthLine program at Lines for Life, a non-profit organization dedicated to preventing suicide and substance abuse across the state of Oregon. I am here to offer our full and complete support of House Bill 2824- establishing an Oregon Youth Council to work directly with and advise the Governor on youth issues.

The YouthLine program is a statewide peer-to-peer teen crisis, support, and helpline. We train and supervise teens and young adults to provide crisis intervention and offer support to other youth through call, text, chat, and email. The YouthLine provides help and support around a variety of teen issues and stressors including, but not limited to, bullying, self-harm, stress management and suicidal ideation. On the YouthLine and in the classroom, we work to keep youth safe and get them the resources they need and deserve. The YouthLine is an ever-growing and important facet in encouraging youth to reach out for help and help raise awareness around suicide prevention, reaching over 13,000 contacts and presenting over 200 classroom lessons in 2018.

At YouthLine, a vital part of our work is empowering youth to advocate for themselves and their peers. We encourage and mentor our youth volunteers to be agents of change in their communities by acting as ambassadors for mental health and wellbeing. It is necessary that our youth feel heard on a legislative level. HB 2824 will provide youth with the platform to understand the importance of the legislative process and elevate their voice as they work together for a common cause with peer-to-peer collaboration. We have seen, first hand, the effectiveness of the peer-to-peer model and how crucial it is to support our youth voices in the development of YouthLine training, outreach, crisis intervention, and mentorship. Our program would not be what it is without their voice.

Thank you for your time. We are grateful for the opportunity to express our full support of House Bill 2824.