

For Immediate Release

July 28, 2026

Jered Weber
Communications Director
Lines for Life
jered.weber@linesforlife.org
701-388-7283

YouthLine Volunteers Participate in U.S. Senate Forum on Youth Mental Health

Oregon and Hawai'i Youth Discuss Peer Crisis Support with National Mental Health Leaders.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Young people who volunteer with YouthLine shared their firsthand experiences with members of Congress and national mental health leaders during a U.S. Senate forum on youth mental health on July 28.

Hosted by U.S. Senator Ron Wyden, D-Ore., and co-hosted by the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, the **Forum on Youth Peer Crisis Support** brought together lawmakers, youth mental health leaders, and YouthLine volunteers from Oregon and Hawai'i to discuss how peer support helps young people navigate mental health challenges.

YouthLine trains volunteers ages 15 to 24 to answer calls, texts, and chats from other young people under the supervision of adult mental health professionals. Each year, YouthLine volunteers hear from more than 25,000 youth in crisis from all 50 states and U.S. territories, offering compassionate, confidential support when young people need someone to listen.

"Young people understand the challenges their peers face in ways adults often can't," said Emily Moser, National YouthLine Director. "Every day, our volunteers listen to young people who are feeling overwhelmed, isolated, or unsure where to turn. They remind their peers that they don't have to face those moments alone."

During the forum, YouthLine volunteers shared what they've learned through conversations with their peers, giving policymakers a firsthand look at peer strategies for improving youth mental health.

"Youth voice is an essential part of crafting effective strategies to support young people," said Dwight Holton, CEO of Lines for Life. "Our volunteers spend thousands of hours listening to their peers, and those experiences can help shape smarter, more responsive policies."

Holton thanked Senator Wyden for delivering these youth voices to Congress.

“Senator Wyden has long championed the youth voice in meeting the mental health needs of young people, and we appreciate his leadership.”

“What I heard today from these standout YouthLine volunteers echoes what Oregonians share with me about mental health when I visit schools, hold town halls and chat in supermarket aisles throughout our state,” Wyden said. “That message unfortunately is that there’s a youth mental health crisis in Oregon and nationwide. Fortunately, YouthLine has pioneered a proven model to tackle this crisis, and I believe it’s a model well worth learning from and expanding.”

The forum comes as youth mental health remains a pressing national concern. According to the Centers for Disease Control, nearly 40% of U.S. high school students reported persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness in 2023, and suicide remains the second-leading cause of death among young people.

Research shows that youth peer supports like YouthLine can be uniquely effective, since adolescents rely increasingly on peers rather than adults for advice and support in navigating the challenges of growing up.

The **Forum on Youth Peer Crisis Support** was held **Tuesday, July 28, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. EDT** in the Senate Finance Committee Hearing Room in Washington, D.C., followed by a reception. During their visit, YouthLine volunteers also addressed mental health leaders at the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors annual meeting and presented at the Crisis Now IV Global Summit on Suicide Prevention.

###

About YouthLine

YouthLine, a service of Lines for Life, is a free, nationwide confidential youth-to-youth crisis and support line. Trained youth volunteers ages 15–24 respond to calls, texts, and chats from other young people under the supervision of adult mental health professionals. Founded in Oregon 25 years ago, YouthLine now serves more than 25,000 young people each year and has expanded to Hawai‘i, where local youth volunteers provide peer support for teens across the islands.

About Lines for Life

Based in Portland, Oregon, Lines for Life is a nonprofit dedicated to preventing substance abuse and suicide and promoting mental wellness. Our work addresses a spectrum of needs including intervention, prevention, and advocacy. Learn more at linesforlife.org.