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CORPORATE OFFICE

## **HB 293 - Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services—9-8-8 Trust Fund**

**Before the House Health and Government Operations Committee**

**February 2, 2022**

**Position: SUPPORT**

The University Maryland Medical System (“UMMS”) is a thirteen-member hospital health system in the state of Maryland. UMMS consists of an academic medical center and urban, suburban and rural-based hospitals. The nearly 29,000 employees provide care to Maryland residents across the state and beyond. UMMS is often a safety net provider for many of Maryland’s most critically ill patients, whether as a result of somatic or behavioral health/mental health crisis issues.

UMMS fully supports HB 293 Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services—9-8-8 Trust Fund. As this Committee is well aware, behavioral health issues are at an all time high and availability and access to services are critical. HB 293 would assign “988” as the phone number for Maryland’s suicide prevention and behavioral health crisis hotline and establish a sustainable funding source to support existing behavioral health crisis call centers in Maryland.

Congress recently designated 988 as the new phone number the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. In July 2022, 988 will go-live. Beginning then, all phone companies will route 988 calls to local crisis call centers that are part of the Lifeline network. The local crisis call centers provide 24/7 free, confidential emotional support to people calling for help. It is expected that calls to the Lifeline will significantly increase when the new number goes live. The state of Maryland must ensure that its existing eight local call centers are adequately resourced to support this influx of calls for help.

Maryland has the unique opportunity to align with national efforts to improve access to crisis care by designating 988 as the number for our state’s behavioral health crisis hotline and ensure adequate funding to support local crisis call centers. For the foregoing reasons, UMMS urges the House Health and Government Operations Committee to give HB 293 a favorable vote.

Respectfully submitted,

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