

February 2, 2022

Health and Government Operations Committee  
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

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

On Our Own of Carroll County, Inc is a Peer Support Wellness and Recovery Center located in Westminster, MD. One of our goals is to provide a safe environment for a diversified group of individuals to come and work on their recovery. We enrich lives by promoting wellness and showing that recovery is possible. We promote equality by reducing stigma through education. We meet people where they are at without judgement as well as offer them hope.

On Our Own of Carroll County is pleased to support HB 293 Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services—9-8-8 Trust Fund. This bill designates 988 to be the phone number for Maryland's suicide prevention and behavioral health crisis hotline and establishes a sustainable funding source to support existing behavioral health crisis call centers in Maryland.

Congress 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 and Maryland needs to ensure that its existing eight local call centers are adequately resourced to support this influx of calls for help.

We strongly believe 988 will be critical in preventing deaths, and stopping the criminalization of mental illness. It is imperative to ensure the safety of people experiencing behavioral health crisis by providing around-the-clock support.

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 ensuring adequate funding to support local crisis call centers. On Our Own of Carroll County urges the House Health and Government Operations Committee to pass HB 293.

Respectfully,

Laurie Galloway

*Laurie Galloway*  
Executive Director

