



**House Health & Government Operations Committee
February 2, 2022**

**House Bill 293
Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services - 9-8-8 Trust Fund**

Support

NCADD-Maryland supports support House Bill 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.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the pre-existing opioid overdose death fatality crisis has worsened. In Maryland, the number of opioid-related deaths increased by 20% between 2019 and 2020, and preliminary data indicates a continued increase in 2021. Ensuring Maryland’s call centers are fully equipped to handle calls related to both mental health and substance use crises is paramount.

When this new Lifeline goes into effect this coming July, it is expected that calls to it will significantly increase and Maryland needs to ensure that its existing eight local call centers are adequately resourced to support this influx of calls for help. This bill will help ensure the resources are there.

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 hotline for substance use and mental health crises, and ensuring adequate funding to support local crisis call centers. We urge a favorable report on House Bill 293.

The Maryland Affiliate of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD-Maryland) is a statewide organization that works to influence public and private policies on addiction, treatment, and recovery, reduce the stigma associated with the disease, and improve the understanding of addictions and the recovery process. We advocate for and with individuals and families who are affected by alcoholism and drug addiction.