

February 2, 2022

Testimony on House Bill 293
Health and Government Operations Committee
House Ways and Means Committee

Position: Favorable

Maryland Nonprofits is a statewide association of more than 1300 nonprofit organizations and institutions. As a member of the Behavioral Health Coalition we urge you to support House Bill 293 to designate **988** to be 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 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.

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.

We urge you to give House Bill 293 a **favorable report**.