



January 19, 2023

**Senate Budget & Tax Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

SB 3 988 Trust Fund – Funding

Baltimore Crisis Response, Inc. (BCRI) provides 24-hour access to call center services. Since 1992 BCRI has provided mental health and substance use services for individuals regardless of their ability to pay. The mission is to provide timely and effective community based services in the least restrictive environment. All services are initiated through our 24/7 988 call center. Individuals can call to receive emotional support, resources, and referrals.

Quinita Garrett, Baltimore Crisis Response, Inc. is pleased to support SB 3 988 Trust Fund – Funding.

This bill provides much needed additional funding for the 988 Trust Fund to support reliable planning and capacity building for the Maryland 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline network.

Last year, Maryland established the 988 Trust Fund and dedicated funding for 988 Lifeline providers for essentially the first time. This funding was critical to support Maryland's transition to 988, the first nationwide three-digit access code for suicidal and behavioral health crisis calls and texts. The helplines that make up Maryland's Lifeline network provide free, 24/7 supportive counseling and safety planning to residents for decades, and the increased call volume and visibility associated with the transition to 988 demands new and continued state investment. Maryland communities need mental health and emotional support more than ever and investing in the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is a critical way to provide that support.

Since 2007, BCRI has been an active Lifeline center and strongly believes in 988's goal to provide free confidential emotional support 24 hours a day across the United States. Baltimore Crisis Response Inc. received 4,589 calls on the local lifeline from January 2021 to December 2021 from residents of Baltimore city seeking support. Lifeline has played an integral part in the lives of residents around the world. The SB 3 988 Trust bill-funding is vital to maintain a robust and trained workforce that are instrumental to promoting community wellness and support.

Maryland has a strong foundation that can be built upon to create the robust 988 network that will keep residents safe and well, but continued investment is needed. Quinita Garrett, Baltimore Crisis response, Inc. **urges the Senate Budget & Tax Committee to pass SB 3.**

Quinita Garrett

