
HB271
Favorable

TO: The Honorable Joseline Peña-Melnyk, Chair
Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Annie Coble
Assistant Director, State Affairs, Johns Hopkins University and Medicine

DATE: February 2, 2023

RE: SB3 9-8-8 Trust Fund – Funding

Johns Hopkins University and Medicine is pleased to **support HB271** 9-8-8 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.

This Fund is to provide reimbursement for the costs associated with maintaining 9-8-8 as the designated National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Starting in July 2022, all phone companies started to 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. Since going live, call volume to 988 has increased 40% and Maryland needs to ensure that its existing eight local call centers are adequately resourced to support this influx of calls for help.

The need for expanded crisis services support is demonstrated by the volume of people brought to hospital emergency departments under emergency petition. Approximately 60% of people brought to a hospital ED are discharged. They do not need inpatient care, but they are in crisis and need assistance. Expanded crisis services like 988 can help address this need. For example 80% of calls to 988 are resolved over the phone.

Johns Hopkins Medicine provides behavioral health crisis services to Marylanders throughout the State. Services are provided through our emergency departments and communities services. Seventeen hospitals, along with three local behavioral authorities and community organizations across Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Carroll County and Howard County were awarded a grant as a part of the Greater Baltimore Regional Integrated Crisis System (GBRICS). GBRICS aims to address behavioral health crises through a robust crisis hotline and referral system and increased access to mobile crisis services, which helps to serve individuals in the community instead of through the criminal justice system or hospital emergency departments. 988 is a vital tool for achieving the goals of GBRICS.

Maryland should protect this valuable, lifesaving resource, by ensuring continued funding of the 9-8-8 Trust Fund. **Johns Hopkins urges the Senate Finance Committee to move favorably HB271.**