
February 3, 2023

House Health and Government Operations Committee

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

HB 271 988 Trust Fund – Funding

NAMI is the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and NAMI Metropolitan Baltimore is the local affiliate serving our community in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. We offer education, support, and advocacy services to help improve the lives of individuals living with mental health conditions, their family members, and communities. We rely on a cadre of nearly 200 volunteers to lead our community programs. They understand mental illness firsthand because they have been there themselves. They use their own experiences to help our program participants work towards recovery. And unfortunately, many of the stories they share include the challenges of accessing crisis services.

NAMI Metropolitan Baltimore is pleased to support HB 271 988 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.

Recovery is possible for all individuals living with a mental health condition, but receiving timely, quality services is essential. NAMI Metro Baltimore operates a warm line to help connect residents to resources. When someone calls in crisis, we refer to our local crisis line providers. Having an easy to remember number greatly aids our callers when getting connected. And knowing that when they call 988, they will be met with caring, immediate help from a trained professional means that calls will be diverted away from police, visits to emergency rooms will be lessened, and our constituents will get the very best care.

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. **NAMI Metropolitan Baltimore urges the House Health and Government Operations Committee to pass HB 271.**

Sincerely,



Kerry Graves
Executive Director