

HB0271- 9-8-8 Trust Fund – Funding
House Health and Governmental Operations Committee
February 7, 2023

Position: Support

The Arc Maryland is the largest statewide advocacy organization dedicated to protecting and advancing the rights and quality of life of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We support **HB0271 – 9-8-8 Trust Fund – Funding** because we know that additional investment in this lifeline is necessary to support the continuance and anticipated growth of critical services for people in crisis; services that people with IDD who have co-occurring mental health conditions may need in crisis.

The goal of the 988 Lifeline is to provide **immediate crisis intervention and support**. Having this immediate help is surely life-saving, and, as this lifeline is on the continuum of crisis prevention and response, it alleviates strain on emergency rooms and First Responders. Trained crisis counselors are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to answer 988 calls or texts, respond/actively listen to the caller, provide immediate support, and provide needed resources.

Since last year, when Maryland established the 988 Trust Fund for the transition to, and expansion of, crisis services, the demand for services has grown. The increased call volume and visibility associated with the transition to 988 now requires continued and enhanced state investment to meet needs.

Maryland communities need mental health and emotional support now, perhaps more than ever^{1,2} and investing in the 988 Lifeline is a critical component of our community health system. HB0271 would ensure Maryland's 988 system will be better suited to handle the rising call and text volume of people seeking crises services, as well as ensure individuals are connected to the services they desperately need to survive and thrive.

We respectfully ask for a favorable report from the committee on HB0271.

Sincerely,



Ande Kolp

Executive Director

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¹ [State of Mental Health in America 2023 | Mental Health America \(mhanational.org\)](https://www.mhanational.org/state-of-mental-health-in-america-2023)

² [Youth suicide attempts soared during pandemic, CDC report says \(nbcnews.com\)](https://www.nbcnews.com/health/youth-suicide-attempts-soared-during-pandemic-cdc-report-says-nbcnews.com)