



February 7, 2023

Chairman Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Kelly, and distinguished members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

The National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a statewide network of more than 45,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations, and service providers. NAMI Maryland is a non-profit that is dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for persons with mental illnesses, their families and the wider community.

As you are likely aware July 16, 2022 marked the launch of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, the first nationwide three-digit phone number for mental health and substance use crises. The new number builds off an existing Lifeline network of over 200 helplines across the country.

Maryland established a 988 Trust Fund with an initial funding level of \$5.5 million available starting in fiscal year 2024 for the purpose of developing and implementing a statewide initiative for the coordination and delivery of the continuum of behavioral health crisis response services in the State, including: (1) Crisis call centers; (2) Mobile crisis team services; (3) Crisis stabilization centers; and (4) Other acute behavioral health care services. SB 3 would require a state budget allocation of \$12 million for fiscal year 2025.

Many communities are committed to diverting people with mental illness away from the criminal justice system. However, in order to do so, communities need effective mental health services, such as outpatient, inpatient and crisis care and coordination. By more than doubling the allocation for the 9-8-8 Trust Fund, passage of **HB 271** will ensure Maryland's 9-8-8 system will be better suited to handle rising call/text volume of people seeking crises services, as well as ensure individuals are connected to the service they need.

NAMI MD urges a favorable report on HB271 – 988 Trust Fund - Funding.
Thank you,

Kathryn S. Farinholt
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