



**Testimony of
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CTIA**

In Support of Maryland House Bill 271

**Before the
Maryland Health & Government Operations Committee**

February 7, 2023

Chair, and members of the committee, on behalf of CTIA®, the trade association for the wireless communications industry, I submit this testimony in support of HB 271, which would make appropriations in the budget for the Maryland 9-8-8 Trust Fund. HB 271 takes proactive steps that coupled with utilizing federal 988 funding will ensure the successful implementation and administration of a state 988 program.

Mental health issues affect a number of Americans, especially in at-risk communities, including LGBTQ+, youth, people of color, people with disabilities, and veterans. Every day, wireless connects us to life-saving services and information when we need it most, and the 988 three-digit dial has made it even easier for Americans to access the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's crucial mental health support in times of crisis. Making it easier to access the Lifeline has been a priority for the wireless industry, and thanks to the efforts of wireless providers, Americans were able to dial 988 to reach the Lifeline a full year ahead of last year's July, 2022 deadline.



CTIA understands the importance of a workable state 988 funding framework. For such an important new service to benefit all Americans, states should fund 988 and related services through general fund revenue to ensure 988 programs receive sufficient funding. We support the efforts of Delegates Kelly and Bagnall and HB 271 to appropriate \$12 million in state funding to the 9-8-8 Trust Fund.

CTIA and our member companies strongly urge that the committee report the bill favorably and appropriate state funding for this critical lifeline for Marylanders. The wireless industry looks forward to working with our federal and state counterparts to ensure that all Americans have access to the mental health support and services needed to prevent suicide.