

February 7, 2023

**House Health and Government Operations Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

HB 271 988 Trust Fund – Funding

Baltimore Crisis Response Inc (BCRI) provides crisis services for Baltimore City and the surrounding area. BCRI manages and operates the 988 Regional Comprehensive Call Center serving Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Carrol County and Howard County. Additionally, BCRI works closely with Baltimore Police Department in providing education and training to police and participating in the 911 Diversion Program. BCRI also provides general mobile crisis response for Baltimore City and provides several residential programs for adults needing support with psychiatric stabilization and substance abuse.

Johnathan Davis, CEO of Baltimore Crisis Response Inc. 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.

BCRI, along with its sub vendors, is expecting to answer up to 120,000 988 calls this year to support individuals in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Carroll County and Howard County. Additionally, BCRI serves up to 1,000 individuals in its residential programs yearly.

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. **Johnathan Davis, CEO of Baltimore Crisis Response Inc. urges the House Health and Government Operations Committee to pass HB 271.**