



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

March 6, 2024

The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary
Chair, Ways and Means Committee
Room 131, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: House Bill 1394 – Education - Provision of 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and Safe Schools Maryland Telephone Numbers – Letter of Support

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) respectfully submits this letter of support for House Bill (HB) 1394 – Provision of 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and Safe Schools Maryland Telephone Numbers. HB 1394 requires each county board of education to provide students in grades six through twelve with the telephone number for the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline in the school handbook and on a student’s school identification card. This requirement is an update from the previous Maryland Youth Crisis Hotline and also requires the Safe Schools Maryland anonymous tip line to be included.

The Department supports this bill, which aligns with statewide efforts to increase awareness of suicide and crisis resources in schools and updates the information from the previous Maryland crisis hotline to the 9-8-8 three-digit number. The 9-8-8 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (“9-8-8 Lifeline”) provides free and confidential emotional support to anyone in emotional distress or experiencing a suicidal crisis 24 hours a day, seven days a week, across the United States. Services can be accessed via phone, text, or chat on the [9-8-8 website](#) and are available in more than 240 languages.

The 9-8-8 Lifeline consists of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers (including nine regional crisis centers in Maryland), through funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). These call centers combine customized local care and resources with national standards and best practices.

We believe this bill will increase awareness and encourage Maryland youth and families to contact 9-8-8 Lifeline. People can call about themselves, their child, a friend, or for other loved ones and speak to a trained specialist who will help them manage the situation and connect to local services.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov or (410) 260-3190.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "LH Scott".

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary