



Heaver Plaza
1301 York Road, #505
Lutherville, MD 21093
phone 443.901.1550
fax 443.901.0038
www.mhamd.org

Senate Bill 36 – Public Safety – 9-1-1 Trust Fund – 9-8-8 Suicide Prevention Hotline

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

January 15, 2025

Position: SUPPORT

Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as behavioral health). We appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of SB 36.

SB 36 permits dollars from the 911 Trust Fund to be used for costs related to operating the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, when those costs are shared with 911 activities.

988 is a critical and potentially lifesaving statewide resource for individuals in need of mental health support, as well as their families. Prior to the establishment of 988 in July 2022, Marylanders typically called 911 in the event of a behavioral health crisis or went to a hospital emergency department, both of which are poor options for individuals experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis, and which divert law enforcement and emergency personnel from other situations where they may be critically needed. The establishment of 988 and behavioral health crisis services result in a more appropriate response that better meets the unique needs of those experiencing a behavioral health crisis.

988 and 911 have shared requirements, both as regards technology and training. SB 36 simply allows collaboration between the systems by removing statutory barriers. As the fiscal note states, SB 36 may decrease expenditures for both the 988 and 911 Trust Funds by permitting administrative efficiencies for both systems and removing any potential duplication of effort.

For this reason, MHAMD supports SB 36 and urges a favorable report.

For more information, please contact Ann Geddes at (443) 926-3396