

SB 36_911 Trust Fund_988 coordination_BHSB_FAVORAB

Uploaded by: Adrienne Breidenstine

Position: FAV



January 15, 2025

**Senate Budget & Tax Committee
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

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

Behavioral Health System Baltimore, Inc. (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization that serves as the local behavioral health authority (LBHA) for Baltimore City. BHSB works to increase access to a full range of quality behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services and advocates for innovative approaches to prevention, early intervention, treatment, crisis response, and recovery for individuals, families, and communities. Baltimore City represents nearly 35 percent of the public behavioral health system in Maryland, serving over 100,000 people with mental illness and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as “behavioral health”) annually.

Behavioral Health System Baltimore supports SB36 – Public Safety - 9-1-1 Trust Fund - 9-8-8 Suicide Prevention Hotline. SB36 will allow the Maryland 911 Board to have more flexibility to invest funding in systems that better coordinate 911 with the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Removing the strict prohibition that is currently in law on the use of funds for only 911 costs will allow more options to build a stronger emergency management along with a stronger behavioral health crisis response system.

The 911 Trust Fund and the Maryland 911 Board play integral roles in investing in Maryland’s 911 emergency management system. Each year, recommendations are made on to how to use the funding available in the 911 Trust Fund both for operations and to upgrade the system. Since the launch of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline in 2022, there has been an interest in better coordinating the services that each resource provides, but strict language in the authorizing statute of the 911 Trust Fund has prevented funding from being used for such purposes. This bill removes that restriction while still maintaining a focused purpose for the 911 Trust Fund to be used to support the 911 system.

Investments in technology and trainings to improve coordination between 911 and 988 will pay dividends for Marylanders. 911 and 988 provide different but related emergency response services. The purpose of 911 is to determine what resources to dispatch as quickly as possible. 988, on the other hand, primarily provides emergency emotional support and can take the time needed to support someone experiencing a behavioral health crisis. Call takers need to be able to transfer calls as appropriate and coordinate the dispatching of behavioral health resources with the dispatch of traditional emergency response services. Baltimore has seen promising results from its [Behavioral Health 911 Diversion Pilot](#) where 911 professionals transfer appropriate mental health calls to 988, and the state should seek to facilitate similar coordination in other jurisdictions. This bill will simply allow the Maryland 911 Board to have the option to fund efforts to improve coordination between 911 and 988 when they deem it necessary and appropriate.

The state should seek to strengthen coordination between 911 and 988 and this bill will help those efforts tremendously. **BHSB urges the Senate Budget & Tax Committee to pass SB36.**

For more information, please contact Adrienne Breidenstine, Vice President, Policy & Communications, BHSB at 443-908-0503.

SB0036_MHAMD_Fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Ann Geddes

Position: FAV



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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

SB36 - FAV - MDEM.pdf

Uploaded by: Anna Sierra

Position: FAV



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Governor | Wes Moore Lt. Governor | Aruna Miller Secretary | Russell J. Strickland

FAVORABLE - SB 36
Public Safety - 9-1-1 Trust Fund - 9-8-8 Suicide Prevention Hotline
Budget and Taxation

Maryland Department of Emergency Management
Hearing Date: 15 JAN 2025

The Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) writes in **support of SB 36 - Public Safety - 9-1-1 Trust Fund - 9-8-8 Suicide Prevention Hotline**. The bill seeks to increase flexibility for public safety answer points (PSAPs) to use the 9-1-1 Trust Fund to enhance 9-1-1 systems. The bill repeals prohibitive language, which currently prevents PSAPs from using the 9-1-1 Trust Fund for enhancing integration or interoperability between 9-1-1 and 9-8-8 systems.

The goal of this legislation is to encourage increased cooperation and collaboration between 9-1-1 and 9-8-8 organizations. The strict prohibition on using 9-1-1 Trust Fund dollars towards any effort related to 9-8-8 significantly limits PSAPs from conducting joint training; pursuing interoperable and integrative technology that will benefit residents and PSAPs alike; and bringing innovative projects to the 9-1-1 Board for consideration. The Maryland 9-1-1 Board remains fiscal stewards of the Trust Fund, and the proposed language will continue to ensure 9-1-1 Trust Fund dollars benefit PSAPs. The Department believes this language will achieve the intent without risking the use of the Trust Fund for efforts that do not benefit the 9-1-1 system.

In conclusion, MDEM urges a **favorable report of SB0036 - Public Safety - 9-1-1 Trust Fund - 9-8-8 Suicide Prevention Hotline**. If you have any questions, please contact Anna Sierra, MDEM legislative liaison: anna.sierra1@maryland.gov.

SB0036_FAV_MedChi, MDAAP, GWSCSW_Pub. Safety - 911

Uploaded by: Christine Krone

Position: FAV

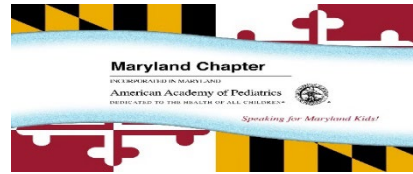


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TO: The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Chair
Members, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
The Honorable Cheryl C. Kagan

FROM: Christine K. Krone
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman
Andrew G. Vetter

DATE: January 15, 2025

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 36 – *Public Safety – 9-1-1 Trust Fund – 9-8-8 Suicide Prevention Hotline*

On behalf of MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, we submit this letter of support for Senate Bill 36. This bill expands the purpose of the 9-1-1 Trust Fund to include funding for costs related to the operation of the 9-8-8 suicide prevention hotline, where those costs may be shared with 9-1-1 activities.

Maryland, like much of the nation, is grappling with a mental health crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and other societal challenges. The state has seen an increase in behavioral health emergencies, and the 9-8-8 hotline has become an essential resource in addressing these needs. As background, funding for 9-8-8 was established under Chapters 780 and 781 of 2024, which created a State 9-8-8 fee similar to the 9-1-1 fee structure. The 9-8-8 fee became effective on October 1, 2024, for phone line subscribers and will apply to prepaid wireless purchasers starting July 1, 2027.

Expanding the 9-1-1 Trust Fund to cover shared operational costs for 9-8-8 services will help Maryland build a more comprehensive, accessible, and responsive system for addressing behavioral health emergencies. The above-named organizations believe Senate Bill 36 is a critical step in improving the integration of Maryland's emergency and behavioral health response systems. By enabling the 9-1-1 Trust Fund to support joint efforts between the 9-1-1 and 9-8-8 systems, the bill will enhance coordination, improve efficiency, and reduce duplication of efforts. We urge a favorable report.

For more information call:

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SB36 FAV NAMI.pdf

Uploaded by: Michael Gray

Position: FAV

January 15, 2025

Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and esteemed members of the Budget and Tax Committee,

The National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a statewide network of more than 58,000 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.

In 2022, Maryland established the 988 Trust Fund to provide dedicated funding for 988—but no permanent funding source was established at that time. Last year, the General Assembly passed SB974, which created a permanent funding mechanism through a \$0.25 per month 988 telecom fee, which is modeled after Maryland's current 911 funding structure. That dedicated funding is essential to meet increasingly strict federal 988 standards and ensure Marylanders can access 988 for lifesaving counselling and support when they need it. NAMI Maryland was proud to support SB974 in the 2024 session.

SB36 would authorize the use of 911 Trust Fund dollars for costs related to the operation of the 988 suicide prevention hotline when there is overlap in the two—for example, software interfaces and joint trainings. Since 988 is a relatively new hotline, there is still much overlap in individuals who call 911 seeking mental health crisis support services, as opposed to 988. Authorizing the 911 Trust Fund to be utilized for costs related to 988 (so long as they are also related to 911) allows for better funding, training, and systems.

There are 781,000 Marylanders with a mental health condition and 181,000 with a serious mental illness. A priority of NAMI MD is to ensure adequate funding to support programs to reach this target population. The goal of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is to provide immediate crisis intervention and support.

NAMI MD is committed to advancing efforts to improve crisis response in our State. Funding 988 is the first step. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.

Kathryn S. Farinholt
Executive Director
National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maryland

Contact: Morgan Mills
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Testimony - 9-8-8 Use of 9-1-1 Funds.pdf

Uploaded by: Sen. Cheryl Kagan

Position: FAV

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Joint Audit and Evaluation Committee
Joint Committee on Federal Relations

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB36: 9-8-8 Use of 9-1-1 Funds
Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
Wednesday, January 15, 2025 10:30 AM

There is a mental health crisis in America. The advent of the 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline in 2022 was a tremendous step forward in providing people with the support they need. The integration of 9-1-1 and 9-8-8 is critical to improve the delivery of services to the public.

[“Carl Henn’s Law”](#)-- named in memory of my friend and Rockville activist who died when 9-1-1 failed-- was enacted in 2019 to ensure that 9-1-1 Trust Fund dollars are used *exclusively* for 9-1-1 services. This limitation impedes our ability to connect 9-8-8 and 9-1-1.

[SB36](#) would allow a very modest amount of money from the 9-1-1 Trust Fund to be spent on 9-8-8 integration.

This bill was requested by the Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM), in consultation with the Maryland 9-1-1 Board Chair and Maryland Association of Counties Emergency Communications Committee. It would allow First Responders to maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency operations while providing support for those in crisis.

Sen. Malcolm Augustine, the Senate’s go-to on 9-8-8, is a co-sponsor of this bill.

I urge a favorable report on SB36.