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Legislative District 14  
Montgomery County

Budget and Taxation Committee

*Subcommittees*

Vice Chair, Capital Budget

Chair, Education, Business and  
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Chair, Senate Democratic Caucus



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Craig J. Zucker**  
**Senate Bill 719- Maryland Department of Health – 2-1-1 Maryland – Mental Health**  
**Services Phone Call Program**  
**Senate Finance Committee**  
**March 3rd, 2021**  
**1:00pm**  
**Position: SUPPORT**

Good afternoon Chairman Kelley, Vice Chairman Feldman, and distinguished members of the committee. It is my pleasure to testify today in **support of Senate Bill 719 – Maryland Department of Health – 2-1-1 Maryland – Mental Health Services Phone Call Program. In particular, I want to thank Senator Malcolm Augustine for his assistance with crafting this legislation.**

Senate Bill 719, would require the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to make recommendations to 2-1-1 Maryland regarding the establishment of a voluntary opt-in mental health services phone call program. This program would require a call center to make scheduled calls to people who have voluntarily opted into the program. The call center will then connect them with a mental health provider upon request.

In 2020, 64,000 Marylanders called 211 asking for assistance in obtaining mental health assistance. 52,000 of them were in suicide crisis. This is an increase of 10,000 people over 2019.

If this legislation becomes law, 2-1-1 Maryland call centers will offer proactive support with crisis specialists if needed. Someone who feels they need mental health assistance can register to opt in and be provided with a direct connection to mental health and crisis services.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention across Maryland one in three people say the pandemic has left them feeling anxiety or depression. They are experiencing catastrophic job losses, food insecurity, and grief from losing loved ones. According to a CDC study in June 2020, 24% of people ages 18 to 24 had considered suicide within the past month.

We want people to know that “it's OK not to be OK,” said Dr. Aliya Jones, Deputy Secretary for the Behavioral Health Administration at the Maryland Department of Mental Health.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 719 to help improve the safety of our Marylanders in crisis. Thank you for your kind consideration.