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House Health & Government Operations Committee

March 30, 2022

Support of Senate Bill 241

The Maryland Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence (MATOD) urges a favorable opinion on SB 241. Our mission is to promote high-quality, effective medication assisted treatment for opioid addiction, so individuals, families, and communities can lead healthy lives in recovery and without stigma.

MATOD is pleased to support SB 241 - Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services—9-8-8 Trust Fund. This bill designates 988 to be the phone number for Maryland's suicide prevention and behavioral health crisis hotline and establishes a sustainable funding source to support existing behavioral health crisis call centers in Maryland.

Congress designated 988 as the new phone number the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. In July 2022, 988 will go live. Beginning then, all phone companies will route 988 calls to local crisis call centers that are part of the Lifeline network. The local crisis call centers provide 24/7 free, confidential emotional support to people calling for help. It is expected that calls to the Lifeline will significantly increase when the new number goes live and Maryland needs to ensure that its existing eight local call centers are adequately resourced to support this influx of calls for help.

Being able to give out the number 988 will make it much easier on staff and patients in the behavioral health field. Currently we have multiple 10 digit numbers we give out to patients when completing personal safety plans. Sadly, most personal safety plans are discarded by patients before they even make it home. Being able to give them a 3 digit number would be much easier for both the patients and staff to remember when dealing with Crisis.

Maryland has the unique opportunity to align with national efforts to improve access to crisis care by designating 988 as the number for our state's behavioral health crisis hotline and ensuring adequate funding to support local crisis call centers.

We urge a favorable opinion on SB 241.

MATOD members include community and hospital based Opioid Treatment Programs, local Health Departments, local Addiction and Behavioral Health Authorities and Maryland organizations that support evidence-based Medication Assisted Treatment. MATOD members include thousands of highly trained and dedicated addiction counselors, clinical social workers, physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, peer recovery specialists and dedicated staff who work every day to save and transform lives.