

Good morning - My name is Tim Jansen I am the Chief Executive Officer of Community Crisis Services in Hyattsville, Maryland. I come to you today in support of Senate Bill three funding the 988 suicide and crisis line bill. My organization has been providing 988 services for the last 52 years – 988 began a little over 20 years ago as the National Hopeline Network. It became national suicide prevention lifeline in early 2005. The movement to three digit dialing from 10 digit dialing as you well know happened last year in July 2022.

Calling 988 is often the first entry an individual has into the mental health system. This can be frightening, overwhelming, and strange. Facing one's mental health struggles or thoughtful suicide is not easy – there is a lot of stigma surrounding mental health and suicide. 988 provides an anonymous opportunity for individuals to seek care, to speak with an informed, counselor, And take the first steps towards safety and wellness.

This resource is available 24 hours every day, 365 days every year. It is imperative that individuals have the opportunity to get care during their time of crisis. Often times, in fact about 90% of the time, the interaction is completed in a phone call. That phone call may just be helping someone to safety plan, to receive a referral for ongoing care, or to just simply work through the difficulties an individual may be facing. If more is needed nine in and counselors are uniquely positioned to connect callers and chatters to urgent care appointments, mobile response teams, and emergency personnel if needed.

In order to ensure ongoing care, the 988 Network needs to ensure that it has resources to provide this life-saving service. That includes ensuring a counselor is available at all times with little to no wait time, it includes ensuring that everyone answering the phone as proper training, it includes ensuring that there is a quality assurance process that shows that we are Following best practices, and it includes ensuring the counselors answering 988 have access to appropriate supervision and self-care.

Three years ago, I lost my mother to suicide. My wonderful 76-year-old mother didn't believe in mental health services. She was brought up in a time when it wasn't talked about – when it was hidden behind closed doors. Even with her son running one of the largest crisis hotline's in the country, she wouldn't reach out. I want to work to ensure that no one else's mom feels that way. I want to make sure that we make 988 is easy to call as it is to call 411 for information or 911 in emergency. No one should succumb to suicide because of the stigma surrounding mental health.

I I heard she does support Senate Bill three to ensure that the 988 network is funded properly so that there are fewer and fewer losses to suicide. Thank you for the opportunity to share this with you.