

January 18th, 2023

TO: Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee

FROM: Henry Meiser, 14286 Solomons Island Road South Solomons, MD 20688
(240)-925-0600, henry.meiser@gmail.com

RE: SB 003

POSITION: In Favor

Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Henry Meiser and I am a high school student from Calvert County, Maryland. In addition to my studies, I serve as the student representative to the Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention, where I have served two terms working to represent the over 900,000 students in the State, and co-founded the nation's first student-lead school safety organization, SafeSchools USA. But today, I am here representing myself (not on behalf of the commission).

The Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention is dedicated to promoting comprehensive and coordinated programs and services designed to reduce the incidence of suicide and suicide attempts, and to promote resilience, hope, and healing. The Commission is charged with developing a state Suicide Prevention Plan every two years. In the 2022-2024 Plan that we submitted to the Governor this past fall, we called for strengthening Maryland's crisis care system, including integrating 988 with crisis response services across the State.

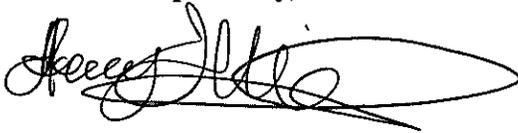
The 9-8-8 Trust Fund addresses this issue by implementing a statewide initiative to coordinate and deliver the continuum of behavioral health crisis response services, including crisis call centers, mobile crisis team services, crisis stabilization centers, and other acute behavioral health care services.

Communities with a continuum of behavioral health crisis services provide people in crisis with appropriate care: the right care in the right place at the right time. They divert people from emergency rooms and from criminal justice involvement, and prevent hospital readmissions, overuse of law enforcement, and suicide.¹ Maryland's 9-8-8 crisis centers stand at the heart of that continuum.

As anticipated, Maryland's launch of 988 in July 2022 resulted in significant increases in crisis calls and texts. As the demand for greater infrastructure for the 988 hotline, so too must the funding. SB3 would increase the allocation for the 9-8-8 Trust Fund and help ensure sustainable funding so that Marylanders in crisis are connected to the services they desperately need, when they need them.

I therefore urge a favorable report on SB3.

Most Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Henry J Meiser", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the printed name.

Henry J Meiser