

**Committee:** House Health and Government Operations Committee

**Bill Number:** House Bill 271

**Title:** 9–8–8 Trust Fund – Funding

**Hearing Date:** February 7, 2023

**Position:** Favorable

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The Maryland School Counselor Association supports *House Bill 271 – 9–8–8 Trust Fund – Funding*. This bill requires \$12 million in state funding for the 9-8-8 Program in fiscal 2025. We represent school counselors who support the health and wellbeing of all children in elementary, middle, and high schools in Maryland public schools.

The 9-8-8 Program is part of a comprehensive strategy to ensure families and children can access behavioral health services in a crisis or to prevent a crisis. Individuals can call 9-8-8 at any time during the day, including after hours, to connect to behavioral health services and other support programs in their area. Maryland needs this service now more than ever. In the 2022 Databook, the Annie E. Casey Foundation reported that the number of youth experiencing anxiety and depression jumped from 9.4% to 12.8% between 2016 and 2022.

We ask for a favorable report on this legislation. It will help ensure that the 9-8-8 Program has the infrastructure support to make it successful. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Robyn Elliott at [relliott@policypartners.net](mailto:relliott@policypartners.net).