



MID-ATLANTIC ASSOCIATION OF  
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS



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TO: The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair  
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee  
The Honorable Ariana B. Kelly

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer  
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DATE: February 7, 2023

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 271 – *9-8-8 Trust Fund – Funding*

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On behalf of the Maryland State Medical Society, the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers, and the Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition, we submit this letter of **support** for House Bill 271. This bill mandates a one-time Fiscal Year 2025 appropriation of \$12 million for the operations of the 9-8-8 Trust Fund. As you know, in 2020, Congress passed, and the President signed into law the National Suicide Designation Act of 2020, which establishes 9-8-8 as a universal number for mental health crises and suicide prevention. In July 2022, 9-8-8 went live. All phone companies now route 9-8-8 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 individuals calling for help. The need for 9-8-8 and the access to a continuum of crisis services is greater than ever.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, suicide has become a leading cause of death in the United States, with the rate the highest in ages 10-34 years old. Maryland needs to ensure that its existing eight local call centers are adequately resourced to support this influx of calls for help. House Bill 271 ensures that the operations of 9-8-8 and the continuum of crisis services continues to have adequate funding until a more permanent mechanism can be identified. We urge a favorable vote.