



Maryland
Hospital Association

Senate Bill 974- Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services - 9-8-8 Trust Fund Fees

Position: *Support*

February 28, 2024

Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

MHA Position

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of Senate Bill 974. This bill establishes a permanent funding source for the 988 Trust Fund to sustain and strengthen 988 mental health helpline services in Maryland.

Providing lifesaving counseling and support will certainly improve care and support for Marylanders in behavioral health crisis. 988 has the added benefit of helping to lower utilization of hospital emergency departments.

Maryland established the 988 Trust Fund in 2022 to provide dedicated funding for 988, but no permanent funding source was established at that time. Instead, federal grants and state general revenue funds supported Maryland's 988 launch. These state and federal funds run out next year. A permanent source is needed to maintain access to this life-saving service.

Senate Bill 974 would create this permanent funding mechanism through a \$0.25 per month 988 telecom fee modeled after Maryland's current 911 funding structure. This would generate \$15-20 million annually to support 988 operations, investments in new technology, and targeted service expansions.

For more information, please contact:

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