



Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the Mid-Atlantic States, Inc  
2101 East Jefferson Street  
Rockville, Maryland 20852

February 28, 2024

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Budget and Taxation Committee  
3 West, Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: SB 974 – Support**

Dear Chair Guzzone and Members of the Committee:

Kaiser Permanente is pleased to support SB 974, “Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services - 9-8-8 Trust Fund Fees.” Kaiser Permanente is the largest private integrated health care delivery system in the United States, delivering health care to over 12 million members in eight states and the District of Columbia.<sup>1</sup> Kaiser Permanente of the Mid-Atlantic States, which operates in Maryland, provides and coordinates complete health care services for over 825,000 members. In Maryland, we deliver care to approximately 475,000 members.

Maryland’s 988 helplines are a critical and effective resource to keep Marylanders experiencing mental health crises safe and supported. The General Assembly established the Maryland 988 Trust Fund to provide ongoing funding and investments for 988 helplines but has not identified a dedicated funding source. One option that Maryland leaders should consider is establishing a 988 telecom fee to provide dependable and predictable funding to the 988 Trust Fund and the essential services it supports.

A telecom fee of at least \$0.25 per month, per line to provide dependable and predictable funding to the Maryland 988 Trust Fund. A 988 telecom fee of \$0.25 would generate approximately \$15-20 million annually that can support ongoing funding for 988 helplines, key helpline investments, and startup funds for targeted crisis service expansion. This funding mechanism would give the 988 and crisis response system adequate funding with which to plan and relieve pressure on general revenue funds at minimal cost to Marylanders.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please feel free to contact me at [Allison.W.Taylor@kp.org](mailto:Allison.W.Taylor@kp.org) or (202) 924-7496 with questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Allison Taylor".

Allison Taylor  
Director of Government Relations  
Kaiser Permanente

---

<sup>1</sup> Kaiser Permanente comprises Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Inc., the nation’s largest not-for-profit health plan, and its health plan subsidiaries outside California and Hawaii; the not-for-profit Kaiser Foundation Hospitals, which operates 39 hospitals and over 650 other clinical facilities; and the Permanente Medical Groups, self-governed physician group practices that exclusively contract with Kaiser Foundation Health Plan and its health plan subsidiaries to meet the health needs of Kaiser Permanente’s members.