

**February 27, 2024**

**Testimony on House Bill 933**  
**Grants Applications and Reporting**  
**HB 933 Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services—988 Trust Fund Fees**  
**House Health and Government Operations Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

Maryland Nonprofits is a statewide association of almost 1800 nonprofit organizations and institutions. We urge you to support House Bill 933 to establish a permanent funding source for the 988 Trust Fund to sustain and strengthen 988 mental health helpline services in Maryland.

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 have supported Maryland's 988 launch. These state and federal funds run out next year. Maryland's 988 network needs a permanent funding source to address this fiscal cliff.

HB 933 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 current 988 operations, investments in new technology, and targeted service expansions. This dedicated funding is essential to meet increasingly strict federal 988 standards and ensure Marylanders can access 988 for lifesaving counseling and support when they need it.

The availability of timely behavioral health care in times of crisis is critical to reduce and physical harm or dangers, and the diversion and costs of unnecessary police or other first responder reactions and resources, and often emergency room services.

We urge you to give House Bill 933 a favorable report.