



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

January 31, 2024

The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary  
Chair, Ways and Means Committee  
Room 131  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: HB 284 – Education - Provision of Maryland Youth Crisis Hotline Telephone Number  
- Alteration – Letter of Support**

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) respectfully submits this letter of support for House Bill (HB) 284 – Provision of Maryland Youth Crisis Hotline Telephone Number - Alteration. HB 284 requires each county board to provide students in grades six through twelve with the telephone number for the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline in the school handbook and on a student’s school identification card, an update from the previous Maryland Youth Crisis Hotline.

MDH supports this bill, which aligns with the statewide efforts to increase awareness in schools and updates the information from the previous Maryland crisis hotline to the 988 three-digit number. The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline provides free and confidential emotional support to anyone in emotional distress or experiencing a suicidal crisis 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. Services can be accessed via phone, text, or chat on the [9-8-8 website](#) and are available in more than 240 languages.

The Lifeline consists of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers (including nine regional crisis centers in Maryland), through funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). These call centers combine customized local care and resources with national standards and best practices.

We believe this bill will increase awareness and encourage Maryland youth and families to contact 988. People can call about themselves, their child, a friend, or for other loved ones and speak to a trained specialist who will help them manage the situation and connect to local services. If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs at [sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov](mailto:sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov) or (410) 260-3190.

Sincerely,

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.  
Secretary