

FAVORABLE
House Bill 284
Education – Provision of Maryland Youth Crisis Hotline Telephone Number – Alteration

House Way and Means Committee
January 31, 2024

Lauren Lamb
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 284, which would update the requirement that each county board of education provide students in grades 6-12 with the telephone number of the Maryland Youth Crisis Hotline to instead require that each county board of education provide students in grades 6-12 with the telephone number of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Between 2016 and 2020, the rate of adolescents experiencing anxiety or depression increased by 36% in Maryland.¹ Public schools play an important role in supporting students' wellbeing, with 15% of adolescents in the U.S. receiving mental health services at school in 2019.² In addition to direct services, schools can take steps to raise awareness and reduce mental health stigma. Ensuring that students know how to easily access a confidential hotline provides a crucial resource for those in crisis. MSEA supports updating requirements to increase awareness of the recently established 9-8-8 Lifeline.

We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on House Bill 284.

¹ *2022 Kids Count Data Book*, Annie E. Casey Foundation (2022). <https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2022kidscountdatabook-2022.pdf>

² *Mental Health in Schools*, National Alliance on Mental Illness (2024). <https://www.nami.org/Advocacy/Policy-Priorities/Improving-Health/Mental-Health-in-Schools#:~:text=Youth%20are%20almost%20as%20likely,who%20saw%20a%20specialty%20provider.>