

March 4, 2025

Good afternoon, Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes and members of the Finance Committee,

NAMI Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a network of more than 58,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations, and service providers. NAMI Maryland is a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for people living with mental illnesses, their families, and the wider community.

Too often those struggling with mental illness fail to receive help in a timely manner. Instead, these individuals are met by law enforcement officers, or other de-escalation efforts that are ill-equipped to address a mental health concern. This is why NAMI Maryland continuously advocates for improvements regarding 988, the nationwide crisis response hotline.

The goal of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is to provide immediate crisis intervention and support. When someone contacts 988, a trained crisis counselor will answer, listen to the person, and provide support and share resources, as needed.<sup>1</sup> However, the evaluation and execution of these 988 services can be strengthened by assessing different metrics, such as data surrounding mobile crisis teams, call centers, and crisis stabilization options.

SB900 requires each crisis communication center in the Maryland Behavioral Health Crisis Response System to coordinate with the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Network. Currently, there is an annual report that generates an evaluation of outcomes of 988 services. This bill provides alternative details to what these evaluation reports should include to provide some baseline metrics to ultimately better understand the efficacy surrounding the 988-crisis hotline, and the impact it has had on the state of Maryland.

These metrics include mobile crisis team dispatch resolution data, crisis stabilization center usage, and mobile crisis team response time, among other measurable initiatives. Put simply: analyzing these outcomes allows us to clearly observe how 988 is serving individuals and communities across Maryland.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.