



March 4, 2025

**Senate Finance Committee**

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

*SB 900 - Maryland Behavioral Health Crisis Response System - Integration of 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Network and Outcome Evaluations*

Mental Health Association of Frederick County is saving families, saving lives and makes our community whole. We offer crisis walk-in care and telephone assistance 24-hours a day, every day of the year. But we will not be able to continue to provide these crisis services without the funding support proposed in SB 900.

**Mental Health Association of Frederick County supports SB900 - Maryland Behavioral Health Crisis Response System - Integration of 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Network and Outcome Evaluations.** This bill would define the role of 988 in Maryland's crisis response system and establish baseline crisis system outcomes the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) must report on each year.

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline was established by Congress and launched nationwide in July 2022. This universal number provides 24/7, free, and confidential crisis counseling and connection to other crisis services such as mobile crisis teams and crisis stabilization centers. These three components of someone to call, someone to respond, and somewhere to go make up the foundation of the behavioral health crisis system.

Maryland had a crisis system established in statute prior to the launch of 988. SB900 seeks to build on this foundation by incorporating 988 and establishing a clear set of outcome metrics to report on. MDH currently collects various data from local behavioral health authorities and providers, but they are not universally available in the same place. Current reporting also does not address all three components of the crisis system. SB900 proposes that MDH annually report on several basic outcomes related to volume, capacity, and performance for 988, mobile crisis teams, and crisis stabilization centers. The information would be broken down by jurisdiction, and would be disaggregated by race, gender, age, and zip code. This information would improve our collective understanding of the crisis system and better enable future planning and decision making about Maryland's crisis response system.

Our team answered over 57,000 phone calls in 2024. Each of these represent a person in crisis who needs help. Having a collective space for reporting would ensure these individuals receive the care they need.

Reliable data is critical to make smart investments in the crisis response system. **Mental Health Association of Frederick County urges the Senate Finance Committee to pass SB900.**

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