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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***

I am Celia Serkin, Executive Director of the Montgomery County Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, Inc. (MC Federation of Families), a family peer support organization serving diverse families in Montgomery County who have children, youth, and/or young adults with mental health, substance use, or co-occurring challenges. MC Federation of Families has been providing family peer services to families in Montgomery County for almost 20 years. Our Family Peer Specialists are parents who have raised or are currently raising children with these challenges. I am a Montgomery County resident and have two children, now adults, who have struggled since childhood with mental health challenges. My son has debilitating depression. My daughter has co-occurring challenges.

**MC Federation of Families supports SB 900 - 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. SB 900 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. SB 900 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.

It is critically important to collect data on how Maryland is building and expanding crisis services. This data collection on Maryland's crisis response system will help improve the effectiveness of services, identify areas for improvement, and contribute to a greater understanding of how this expansion is impacting different races, genders, age cohorts, and those living in specific zip codes. The data collected will help to advance health and race equality in Maryland.

Reliable data is critical to make smart investments in the crisis response system. **MC Federation of Families urges the Senate Finance Committee to pass SB 900.**