

Testimony in Support of House Bill 883 – Consumer Protection – Artificial Intelligence – Behavioral Health Care Prohibitions

Before the House Economic Matters Committee

Chair Valderrama, Vice Chair Charkoudian, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 883 – Consumer Protections – Artificial Intelligence – Behavioral Health Care Prohibitions. My name is Megan O’Brien, and I serve as the Advocacy Specialist at EveryMind, a nonprofit organization that has served Maryland’s communities for nearly 70 years by providing prevention, early intervention, and mental health services across the continuum of care, including running one of the state’s 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifelines.

We rely on our behavioral health workforce, which includes several professionally licensed individuals such as social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists, to provide services to all Marylanders in need of support. The Maryland Health Care Commission’s 2024 report “Investing in Maryland’s Behavioral Health Talent” stated that the significant shortage in this workforce is impacting access to care and will continue to get worse as the demand for behavioral health professionals increases. By 2028, Maryland will need more than 32,000 more workers to meet the demand for behavioral healthcare. Without a growing cohort of behavioral health professionals, Marylanders in need will go without the mental health supports they require, which may in turn lead them to seek support from other sources like artificial intelligence.

EveryMind strongly supports House Bill 883 because it provides important protections for vulnerable Marylanders seeking support in moments of crisis. The inability to access timely and affordable care can force some to turn to AI chatbots for comfort, advice, and even therapeutic support. These platforms lack the training of licensed professionals, only reflect back the users’ own thoughts and intentions to them, and in some cases may put the user in more harm than they were before they started chatting.

Artificial intelligence is not equipped with the skills required to safely replace a licensed professional. A 2025 Stanford study examined the ways that chatbots responded to users experiencing severe mental health concerns, such as suicidal ideation and psychosis, and discovered that the chatbots could not provide appropriate responses, in fact they often gave responses that escalated the crises instead of de-escalating them. The conclusion of the researchers was that chatbots could not – and should not – replace the key foundations of therapy provided by humans. The human-to-human connection provides understanding, empathy, and stakes that you just can’t achieve with a machine.

Requiring these platforms to identify when users are exhibiting serious mental health conditions and refer them to behavioral health or crisis response services is the bare minimum we can ask of these companies. Taking this important step can help save lives.



At EveryMind, we see the daily impact of life-saving services each time we answer a call to the 988 hotline from someone in crisis. For this, we urge a favorable report on House Bill 883. Thank you for your consideration, and for your leadership on this critical issue.