

March 3, 2026

Chairs, Vice Chairs, and distinguished members of the Health and the Economic Matters Committees,

NAMI Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a network of more than 60,000 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.

We have become increasingly concerned by reports of Marylanders in crisis turning to artificial intelligence chatbots for therapy, often with devastating results. HB 883 provides essential protections by establishing clear boundaries for artificial intelligence chatbots in our State.

This legislation would prevent AI developers from misleading the public about the capabilities of artificial intelligence in the realm of behavioral health care by prohibiting developers from making any representation that implies an AI is a licensed behavioral health care provider, such as a counselor, psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, or therapist. AI chatbots and machines lack the clinical judgment and ethical accountability necessary to treat complex mental health conditions.

Additionally, any AI provided to Maryland consumers must include a clear and conspicuous notice at the beginning of every use stating that the consumer is not communicating with a human. This ensures that individuals seeking support are fully aware that they are interacting with a technology algorithm rather than a trained, human professional. This clarity is essential for vulnerable populations who may otherwise mistakenly believe they are receiving clinical treatment.

The safety protocols mandated by this legislation address the high-stakes and time sensitive reality of mental health crises. The bill requires AI to include protocols to take reasonable steps to detect and address suicidal ideations or expressions of self-harm. Most importantly, when such risks are detected, the AI must refer the consumer to the Maryland Behavioral Health Crisis Response System. This direct link to human-led crisis services ensures that those in immediate danger are moved toward the actual behavioral health services they need.

We encourage this committee to protect Maryland residents from the risks of unregulated AI in behavioral health care. We ask for a favorable report.

Stephanie Slowly-Little
Executive Director
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