

FUND MARYLAND 988 CAMPAIGN



BECAUSE, all Marylanders deserve equitable, timely, and effective mental health and substance use care, including behavioral health crisis care;

BECAUSE, the 988 Helpline launched in July 2022, establishing for the first time a national three-digit number for mental health and substance use crisis response;

BECAUSE, the 988 Helpline resolves 80 percent of crisis calls safely, over the phone and only 20 percent of calls need an in-person response to be safe and supported;

BECAUSE, people who go to hospital emergency rooms for mental health and substance use crises may have to wait many hours to receive care;

BECAUSE, overreliance on law enforcement for responding to behavioral health crises has led to inequitable access to care, poor health outcomes, and disproportionate arrest and incarceration for people of color;

BECAUSE, people with untreated mental illness are 16 times more likely to be killed by law enforcement;

BECAUSE, suicide rates in Maryland are rising, 620 people died by suicide in 2021, while 720,000 young people and 200,000 adults had serious thoughts of suicide;

BECAUSE, the 988 Helpline and crisis response network are essential public services that demand sustained investment to serve all those in need 24/7, 365 days a year across Maryland;

BECAUSE, a dedicated revenue source modeled after how 911 is funded is the best and most effective way to provide sustained funding for the Maryland 988 and crisis response network over the long term; and

BECAUSE, Marylanders expect a well-operated and fully funded mental health and substance use crisis response system that they can depend on to deliver equitable, timely, and effective care in times of emergency.

THEREFORE, the undersigned organization supports 1) Establishing a 988 telecom fee to invest in the Maryland 988 and crisis response network; 2) Expanding access to the full continuum of crisis response services; and 3) Better integrating crisis response services into our system of care to divert more calls from 911 and reduce our reliance on law enforcement and emergency rooms for behavioral health crisis intervention.

Name of Organization/Individual (please print)		Number of Members
Authorized Signature	Contact Person (please print)	Date
Organization Street Address	County	City
State	Zip	Phone
		Email

**RETURN TO: BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEM BALTIMORE, MD988@BHSBALTIMORE.ORG
CALL 443-401-6142 WITH QUESTIONS.**



WHAT IS 988?

It is the new easy-to-remember phone number for the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. The 988 network is available around the clock, 365 days a year. Counselors at local crisis call centers answer calls and texts to provide free, confidential advice and emotional support for people in distress. It is not only about providing support but also about providing connection to community mental health and substance use services at critical moments for people across Maryland.

WHEN DID 988 GO LIVE?

The new 988 number launched in July 2022. All phone companies will now route 988 calls and texts to local helplines that are a part of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline network.

HOW WILL 988 HELP OUR COMMUNITIES?

Many people experiencing a mental health or substance use emergency call 911 or go to a hospital emergency room for help, which can cause delays in care, frustration, and potentially more harm than help for the person in distress. This is even more pronounced for people of color and other marginalized groups. Police are not well-equipped to deal with a mental health or substance use emergency, and their involvement too often leads to trauma, jail, or the inappropriate use of force – including the death of the person in need.

988 can serve as an alternative to calling 911 or going to the hospital emergency room for people facing a mental health or substance use emergency. Call center counselors are based locally and trained in crisis response, suicide prevention, and de-escalation. They can provide a range of support to resolve a situation over the phone. 988 counselors can ensure that people in crisis receive responsive, appropriate, and compassionate services, and reduce our reliance on law enforcement and hospitals.

WHAT IS THE FUND MARYLAND 988 CAMPAIGN?

The Fund MD988 Campaign is working to secure dedicated revenue to support the continuum of behavioral health crisis services to meet Maryland's needs. Maryland currently does not provide 24/7 crisis services in all communities, and investments are needed to build out the 988 network and other crisis response services such as mobile crisis teams and crisis stabilization centers. The Campaign has secured over \$22 million in state funding over the last two years and aims to build on that success to continue to strengthen and grow the Maryland behavioral health crisis response system.

WHY DOES MARYLAND NEED TO INVEST IN 988 AND OTHER CRISIS SERVICES?

Without expanding staff and services, Marylanders in distress will continue to turn to hospital emergency rooms. Maryland's local 988 network needs continued funding to hire and train the staff needed to meet the demand for 988. Calls have increased by 40% since 988 launched and call volume will only continue to rise as more people learn about 988. Timely and dependable 988 responses, as well as other community interventions, are critical to preventing suicides, resolving crises, and saving lives.

HOW CAN I HELP THE CAMPAIGN?

988 benefits residents across Maryland – particularly those who have been underserved in the past. Please endorse this resolution, educate your network, and help advocate for the mental health and substance use services Marylanders need to be healthy and safe.

