

FUND MARYLAND 988 CAMPAIGN

Mental health and substance use crisis services for anyone, anywhere, anytime

- Because**, all Marylanders deserve equitable, timely, and effective mental health and substance use care, including behavioral health crisis care;
- Because**, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline launched in July 2022, establishing for the first time a national three-digit number for mental health and substance use crisis response;
- 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**, over-reliance 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**, Marylanders have been forced to rely on hospital emergency rooms and law enforcement to provide mental health and substance use crisis response even though these are not the best settings for care;
- Because**, the COVID pandemic has made mental health and substance use worse for Marylanders, greatly increasing the number of people who are seeking help for mental health and substance use services;
- Because**, mental health and substance use crisis services are for anyone, anywhere, and anytime;
- Because**, the current system to treat mental health and substance use crises does not have the capacity to serve all those in need 24/7, 365 days a year across Maryland; and
- Because**, Marylanders deserve 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) Investing in the Maryland 988 Lifeline network; 2) Expanding access to the full continuum of crisis response services; and 3) Integrating crisis response services into the broader 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, 100 S. Charles Street, Tower II, Baltimore, MD 21201, ATTN: Daniel Rabbitt, **email:** MD988@bhsbaltimore.org. **Call 443-401-6142 with questions.**

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1. What is 988?

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

2. When did 988 go live?

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

3. 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.

4. What is the Fund MD988 Campaign?

The Fund MD988 Campaign is working to secure dedicated funding 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 call centers and other crisis response services such as mobile crisis teams and crisis stabilization centers. The Campaign secured over \$10 million in funding during the 2022 Maryland legislative session and aims to build on that success to continue to strengthen and grow the Maryland behavioral health crisis response system.

5. 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 call centers need funding to hire and train the staff needed to meet the projected demand for 988. Calls have already increased by 30% compared to 2021 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.

6. How can I help the campaign?

988 benefits residents across Maryland – particularly those who have been under-served 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.