

# MD988 FUND

## Campaign

**Because**, all marylanders deserve equitable, timely, and effective mental health and substance use care, including behavioral health crisis care;

**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**, 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;

**Because**, congress authorized the states to designate 988 as the new phone number for mental health and substance use crises which will greatly increase the number of calls for help; 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) establishing 988 as maryland's behavioral health crisis hotline for mental health and substance use crises; 2) establishing a state fund to invest in 24/7 call centers, mobile crisis teams, crisis stabilization centers, and related crisis response services; and 3) allocating an initial \$10 million in 2022 to the fund to ensure that call centers are adequately staffed and available 24/7.

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Name of Organization/Individual **(please print)**

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Number of Members

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Authorized Signature

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Contact Person **(please print)**

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Date

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Organization Street Address

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County

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City

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State

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Zip

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Phone

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Email

**Return to:** Behavioral Health System Baltimore, 100 S. Charles Street, Tower II, Baltimore, MD 21201,  
ATTN: Daniel Rabbitt, **email:** [MD988@bhsbaltimore.org](mailto:MD988@bhsbaltimore.org). **Call 443-401-6142 with questions.**

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## Campaign

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

### 1. What is 988?

It is the new easy-to-remember phone number for the National Suicide Prevention and Behavioral Health Crisis Hotline. 988 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 will 988 take effect?

988 goes live in July 2022. Beginning then, all phone companies will route 988 calls to local call centers that are a part of the National Suicide Prevention and Behavioral Health Crisis 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 MD988 Fund Campaign?

The MD988 Fund 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 proposes that the state establish a dedicated 988 Fund and allocate \$10 million in 2022 to make sure that the state's 988 call centers have adequate staffing and resources to support the state's growing service needs.

### 5. What will the \$10M be used for?

Maryland's local 988 call centers would use the funding to hire and train staff and equip call centers with the tools they need to meet the projected demand for services once 988 launches. The figure is based on national estimates of projected call volume and current call center capacity.

### 6. How can I help the campaign?

988 will benefit residents across Maryland – particularly those who have been underserved in the past. Please endorse this resolution, educate your network, and help advocate for establishing the 988 Fund and initial allocation this year! Sign on to support our campaign, and share with other Marylanders and organizations.