

# FUND MARYLAND 988 CAMPAIGN

Crisis Services for Anyone, Anywhere, Anytime

## Securing Funding for a Statewide Behavioral Health Crisis Response System SB 241/HB 293: Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services - 9-8-8 Trust Fund

**The Problem:** Maryland residents are forced to call police or go to hospital emergency rooms when experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis, even though they are not the best source of care for those in emotional distress. Our existing system of call centers and related crisis services can provide more appropriate care, but it lacks the resources needed to serve everyone and too many people don't know where to go for help.



■ Maryland is dealing with a major spike in behavioral health crises:

- Nearly 2,800 Marylanders lost their lives to overdose in 2020, a record. Death by suicide also increased to 650 lives lost.



■ Too often police are called to respond to mental health and substance use crises – but officers are not well-trained to deal with them.

- The risk of being killed by law enforcement is 16 times higher for individuals with untreated serious mental illness.



■ Maryland's crisis response system cannot fully meet the needs of our communities.

- Those in distress often go to hospital emergency rooms, which can be chaotic and isolating for those in crisis. In 2019, Maryland hospitals had more than 417,000 visits for behavioral health crises.

**The Solution:** We need a well-resourced crisis system to serve as an alternative to 911 and visits to hospital Emergency Departments. Maryland, along with the rest of the country, will transition to a new suicide prevention and behavioral health crisis hotline number, 988. As this new hotline number launches, we must invest in call centers to ensure our system can meet the needs of all Marylanders. Sustained investments in 988 and crisis services can reduce our over-reliance on emergency rooms and law enforcement while improving the care people receive.

**Fund Maryland 988 Campaign:** Supporters are urging the General Assembly to pass legislation (SB 241/HB 293) to take full advantage of the transition to 988. This legislation would:

1. Establish the Maryland 988 Trust Fund to invest in crisis call centers, mobile crisis teams, crisis stabilization centers, peer support, and related crisis response services;
2. Ensure Maryland collaborates with the federal government to promote 988 as the national suicide prevention and behavioral health crisis hotline; and
3. Appropriate an initial \$10 million in the Trust Fund to support local crisis call centers in preparing for increased call volume as a result of the 988 launch.