

**Senate Bill 900 Maryland Behavioral Health Crisis Response System - Integration of 9-8-8
Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Network and Outcome Evaluations**

Finance Committee

March 4, 2025

Position: SUPPORT

The Mental Health Association of Maryland is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and substance use disorders (collectively referred to as behavioral health). We appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of Senate Bill 900.

SB 900 defines the role of Maryland's 988 helpline as part of the state's broader crisis response system and establishes a range of volume, capacity and performance outcomes that must be measured, collected and reported each year. These data points include:

- **988 call, text and chat volume, answer rate and resolutions, including:**
 - The proportion of crises resolved by phone, or through dispatch of a mobile crisis team, or by transfer to 911
- **Mobile crisis team dispatch volume, response time and resolutions, including:**
 - The proportion of crises resolved safely in the community or transferred to a higher level of care
- **Crisis stabilization center usage and discharge data, including:**
 - The proportion of crises resolved through discharge to home or discharge to a higher level of care

Crisis response services are an essential component of Maryland's behavioral health system of care. They provide early intervention to stabilize individuals experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis quickly and at the lowest level of care appropriate, and they are a key strategy in the state's ongoing efforts to reduce preventable emergency department visits, inpatient hospitalizations, homelessness and criminal justice involvement.

SB 900 will ensure the continued development of Maryland's behavioral health crisis response system is data-driven and strategically addressing gaps in care. For these reasons, MHAMD supports this bill and urges a favorable report.