

**Verbal Testimony on Senate Bill 241 on 988 Expansion
(Goal on words: 240, or 2 minutes)**

- Thank you, Chairwoman Kelley and members of the Finance Committee.
- My name is Dr. Rolando Santiago and I am the Chief of Behavioral Health and Crisis Services in Montgomery County.
- I'm here to testify on behalf of the Montgomery County's Department of Health and Human Services.
- The \$10 million Trust Fund proposed in Bill 241 is a good start for providing needed financial resources for the National Suicide Prevention Lifelines in the State of Maryland and for implementing a coordinated behavioral health crisis response statewide.
- In Montgomery County the tripling of calls through 988 means that after July of 2022 the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline alone will be asking our Crisis Center to dispatch mobile crisis and outreach teams to 900 crisis incidents in a year.
- When you add calls for service from 911, 311, and the community, the demand will go well over 1,500 calls for service
- Right now we can only respond to less than 1,000 of these calls.
- We need financial support to meet the increased demand.
- Just yesterday, we experienced the heartbreaking suicide of a student in Montgomery County. Our mobile crisis outreach team was involved in the response, and our services were needed on site and will also be needed in the days to come to offer support to families, students, and the community. In time, implementing 9-8-8 will hopefully reduce occurrences of suicide and crisis response; until that becomes a reality, adequate state resources will be needed to support the growing demand for crisis services.
- That's why I support wholeheartedly Senate Bill 241.