



SB 974

Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services—9-8-8 Trust Fund Fees

House Health and Government Operations Committee

March 27, 2024

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Committee:

Inseparable appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 974, which would provide sustainable funding for the 9-8-8 Trust Fund. Inseparable is a national nonprofit focused on closing the treatment gap for people with mental health and substance use conditions, improving crisis response, and supporting youth mental health.

We are grateful that the General Assembly passed SB 241 (2022) and established the 9-8-8 Trust Fund. As mental health, substance use, and suicidal crises continue to affect Marylanders, there is a compelling need for sustainable funding to provide effective, recovery-focused crisis response services. The crisis continuum of care includes three main elements that support recovery: **someone to talk to** (crisis call lines), **someone to respond** (mobile response teams), and **a safe place to go** (a range of crisis stabilization options).

SB 974, through a nominal \$0.25 per month 9-8-8 telecom fee, would provide a stable source of revenue for services and reduce the strain on state general funds. Similar telecom fees have been adopted by eight other states—California, Colorado, Delaware, Minnesota, Nevada, Oregon, Virginia, and Washington. We are pleased to see Maryland poised to join these states as a national leader in ensuring stable funding for a 988 crisis continuum of care.

Most importantly, the services provided by this small surcharge would help children and adults who are struggling receive vital care in their communities and reduce avoidable and costly emergency department visits, incarcerations, and hospitalizations.

In closing, Inseparable urges a favorable report by the committee for SB 974.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Angela Kimball".

Angela Kimball
Chief Advocacy Officer