



February 28, 2024

To: The The House Health and Government Operations Committee

From: Adventist HealthCare

Re: HB 933 Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services—988 Trust Fund Fees

POSITION: SUPPORT

Adventist HealthCare is pleased to support HB 933 Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services—988 Trust Fund Fees. This bill establishes a permanent funding source for the 988 Trust Fund to sustain and strengthen 988 mental health helpline services in Maryland.

Maryland established the 988 Trust Fund in 2022 to provide dedicated funding for 988, but no permanent funding source was established at that time. Instead, federal grants and state general revenue funds have supported Maryland’s 988 launch. These state and federal funds run out next year. Maryland’s 988 network needs a permanent funding source to address this fiscal cliff.

HB 933 would create this permanent funding mechanism through a \$0.25 per month 988 telecom fee modeled after Maryland’s current 911 funding structure. This would generate \$15-20 million annually to support current 988 operations, investments in new technology, and targeted service expansions. This dedicated funding is essential to meet increasingly strict federal 988 standards and ensure Marylanders can access 988 for lifesaving counseling and support when they need it.

As a medical hospital with a large emergency department, diversion from unnecessary emergency visits is essential to our wait times and throughput. Additional visits, for people seeking mental health support, adds stress to those seeking emergency medical attention as the resources are thinned. The benefits of 988 are exponential in connecting people to mental health professionals more effectively and efficiently than an emergency department can.

For these reasons, Adventist HealthCare supports HB933 with amendments.

