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ThriveBHRI.org

Representative Marvin Abney, Chairman
House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

May 22, 2025

Dear Representative Abney and members of the House Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of House Bill H6128, which would establish a long-term, sustainable funding source for Rhode Island's 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

As a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC), Thrive Behavioral Health is on the front lines of providing urgent, life-saving mental health and substance use services to Rhode Islanders, regardless of their ability to pay. We see firsthand the importance of timely, compassionate crisis care and the critical role that the 988 Lifeline plays in ensuring people in distress are met with support rather than silence.

Since its launch in July 2022, 988 has fundamentally transformed access to behavioral health crisis services. In Rhode Island alone, the 988 and BH Link hotlines have answered over 65,000 calls, with an in-state answer rate of 98%—one of the highest in the country—and an average response time of just two seconds. These are more than just numbers; they reflect lives touched, crises de-escalated, and, in many cases, lives saved.

The comprehensive vision for 988—someone to talk to, someone to respond, and somewhere to go—closely aligns with the CCBHC model that Thrive embodies. Yet, while Rhode Island has made extraordinary progress, this federal mandate remains unfunded, putting long-term sustainability at risk.

Senate Bill S0892 solves this problem by directing a portion of already collected funds from existing 911 and first responder surcharges to support 988 operations. Importantly, this legislation imposes no new taxes or fees. It simply ensures that a share of current revenue is used to fund a core behavioral health service that reduces pressure on emergency departments and law enforcement, and delivers more appropriate, trauma-informed care in moments of crisis.

At Thrive, we know that mental health crises do not follow a 9-to-5 schedule. Our staff work around the clock because it is what our communities need. The 988 Lifeline is an essential part of that continuum. Sustained funding is not just a policy choice; it is a public health imperative.



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We urge you to support House Bill H6128 and uphold the commitment Rhode Island has made to its residents: that when they are in crisis, help is always just three digits away.

Thank you for your leadership and for prioritizing the behavioral health needs of all Rhode Islanders.

Respectfully,

Dawn Allen

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