

Chris O'Brien

From: Sylvestre, Tamara <TSylvestre@sevenhills.org>
Sent: Wednesday, May 21, 2025 11:53 AM
To: House Finance Committee; Rep. Shallcross Smith, Mary Ann; Rep. Shekarchi, K Joseph
Subject: Fw: Vote Yes on 988 bill, H-6128

On October 17, 2020, Congress passed legislation, co-authored by Rhode Island's own Senator Jack Reed, creating the new 988 behavioral health Lifeline. This federal legislation designates 9-8-8 as the universal telephone number for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline.

There was a time in my life when I was in a crisis and there was no such service available. While I had struggled with anxiety for several years, it was not until college that I really sunk to a place that I doubted I could ever climb out of. I was sexually assaulted. The misplaced shame I felt led to me making dangerous choices with alcohol. When I was sober again, I still felt guilty about the assault but then added the shame of the difficulty I caused friends and family with the risks I was taking. I remember thinking that I did not want to die but that everyone around me would be better off if I had never been born. I honestly did not believe there would ever be a time when I could be happy or even like myself again. When I was ready to get help, I called many places only to be told it was months before anyone could help me. Eventually someone told me to go to the emergency room and say I was in a crisis. Again, I felt guilt; this time that I was taking resources from people who "really needed it." It is so hard to ask for help and when it is not readily available people second guess themselves, feel like a burden, and question if they are worth the effort. I can only imagine the potential positive impact of access to 988 would have had on me: a safe line to express myself and get the help I so desperately needed.

This legislation establishes a long-term, and sustained, funding source for the state's 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. We need state legislation to ensure that this critical lifeline for all Rhode Island residents is fully funded each year with room to expand the 988 vision of "someone to talk to, someone to respond, and somewhere to go."

Please support the long-term funding of 988 through H-6128 to ensure that Rhode Island sustains and fully funds this important mental health and substance use treatment resource. Your support, and the passage of this bill, will save lives!

Sincerely,

Tamara Sylvestre, MSPT (she/her)
Early Intervention Physical Therapist

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