



# OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT & BUDGET

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May 14, 2026

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney  
Chair  
House Committee on Finance  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02903

**Re: House Bill 8177 – An Act Relating To Public Utilities And Carriers – 988 Call Center Funding And Operations Act**

Dear Chair Abney,

Thank you for providing the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) within the Department of Administration (Department) the opportunity to submit comments in response to House Bill 8177 which would establish requirements for the operations of the 988 call center and make the call center exempt from “oversight, direction, or operational control by any sole state agency.”

The bill would prevent the Office of Internal Audit and Program Integrity (OIAPI) from executing its mission of auditing the use of any state-appropriated funds, including those sent to grant recipients.<sup>1</sup> Excluding the 988 call center from OIAPI oversight would be highly unusual and present a significant risk for fraud, waste, and abuse that is not aligned with best practices.

Additionally, the 988 call center is currently funded with \$5.35 million in State Fiscal Recovery Funds (SFRF) appropriated by the General Assembly to the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Development Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH). The U.S. Department of the Treasury (Treasury) established stringent rules and reporting requirements for states’ use of SFRF that encompasses allowable costs, provision of contract and spend information, and key performance indicators.

The General Assembly and the Administration created the Pandemic Recovery Office (PRO) to administer SFRF, including ensuring compliance with all state and federal laws, rules, and regulations. PRO maintains consistent communication with state agencies and other entities that are carrying out SFRF projects on behalf of the State, including the 988 call center. Removal of the 988 call center from PRO oversight would increase the risk that the State would become non-compliant with such mandates and result in the return of SFRF to Treasury for non-compliant use.

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<sup>1</sup> [RIGL § 35-7.1-1.](#)

At the end of 2026, SFRF support for 988 operations will expire, necessitating new sources of revenue for the program. The Governor's FY 2027 budget proposes \$1.0 million in general revenue for 988 operations. The budget also ensures that the State exercises appropriate contractual and fiscal oversight by granting BHDDH statutory authority to "establish, operate and/or designate" the 988 hotline.

While the bill states that the 988 call center "shall operate collaboratively" with the State, it exempts it from the level of oversight and monitoring that the State provides to all other appropriations, resulting in the above concerns.

OMB appreciates the opportunity to share this information about this legislation with the Committee. If there are any questions, please feel free to contact my office at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Brian M. Daniels  
Director, Office of Management and Budget

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Finance  
The Honorable Mary Ann Shallcross Smith  
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House  
Christopher O'Brien, Committee Clerk