



May 14, 2026

Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of H8177 and urge you to enact permanent, dedicated state funding for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and the enhanced crisis services that make it effective. Over the past several years, our state has made meaningful investments to advance behavioral health access and intervention effectiveness through the establishment of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Call Center, the Crisis Receiving and Stabilization Center (BHLink), the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs), the Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS), and other mobile crisis teams.

Together, these are no longer isolated programs; they are evolving into a coordinated system of care, one that works and gives people in crisis a place to turn that is responsive, clinically appropriate, and far more compassionate than past alternatives. For decades, we have acknowledged a troubling reality: people experiencing behavioral health crises too often end up in emergency departments or in jail cells. These settings are costly, overburdened, and ill equipped to provide proper care. It has been long recognized and said time and time again, this is not acceptable. But now, for the first time, we have the infrastructure to change it.

988, as a reliable open door, allows us to divert individuals away from 911 and into the behavioral health response system. Mobile crisis teams can meet people where they are in the community in a discreet, dignified way without flashing lights and drawing community attention, and the crisis stabilization center provides intensive short term crisis treatment that diverts people from hospitals and avoids unnecessary criminal justice involvement. Without permanent and reliable funding, however, this progress is at risk. Year to year, patchwork funding undermines workforce stability, limits capacity, and sends a message of uncertainty to providers and the public alike. A system designed to respond to crisis cannot itself operate in a constant state of instability.

Permanent funding is not just a fiscal decision, it is a policy commitment. It signals that we are serious about reducing reliance on law enforcement for behavioral health crises, decreasing unnecessary emergency room utilization, and preventing incarceration of individuals who need care, not custody.

We stand at a pivotal moment. We can either sustain and strengthen this system, or allow it to remain fragmented and fragile. The choice before you is to fully commit and realize the virtue of these investments.

We urge you to act now to secure permanent funding for 988 and its connected services. Doing so will save lives, improve outcomes, and create a behavioral health system that reflects our collective values and meets the needs of our communities.

James DiNunzio
President/CEO
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