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Senator Melissa A. Murray
Chair, Senate Health & Human Services Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street Providence, RI 02903

March 23, 2026

Dear Sen. Murray and Committee Members:

I'm writing on behalf of Community Care Alliance - the agency who staff and operates the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and BH Link - in support of S-3058. This bill ensures funding for these vital services.

As I reflect upon how these services benefit Rhode Islanders, I recall not only my time working within my organization – but also my time volunteering with a church in East Greenwich. Those in need would come to the priest for help. Overwhelmed by the silos and various, complex eligibility requirements to access our state's many systems, he would often ask me for guidance:

- Question: I'm speaking with someone about to lose their housing, with multiple stressors and challenges. They aren't sure where to turn. Where can they start? *Answer: call 988.*
- Question: I'm speaking to someone having a mental health crisis, and they aren't sure where to turn. Where can I send them? *Answer: call 988.*

Time and again, this was the pattern: when someone needed help, they could start with 988 and be shepherded through the process from there.

Similarly, I recall an acquaintance who asked for help when her teenage daughter was struggling. Rather than needing to sort through her insurance, where they lived, or what the need was, I could direct her to 988 knowing they in turn could dispatch out the appropriate Mobile Response & Stabilization Services (MRSS).

I think back on those who called 988 after the Brown University and Pawtucket shooting tragedies, and how they had access to confidential, free, and immediate crisis counseling.

In every instance, those unsure where to begin, or how to navigate a complex system, could reach out first to 988 knowing they could receive immediate support via their trained crisis counselors, and, if indicated, immediate connection and warm handoff to **a place to go** (the 24/7, open access BH Link triage center, also included in this bill) or **someone to respond** (an adult mobile crisis team or youth and family MRSS team).

By now, you are all aware that BH Link is comprised of two parts:



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1. ***A place to call: the call center.*** Crisis counselors work *in-state* and *in-person* to answer for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and 414-LINK, culminating in over 22,000 calls per year.

Over 98% of calls are answered in-house, versus a national backup center; calls are answered in less than 2 seconds, on average; and over 95% of calls are resolved without need for further emergency intervention.

Both children and adults can access this confidential service 24/7, free of charge, to receive on-demand crisis counseling and connection to resources and ongoing care.

2. ***A place to go: the triage center.*** The Link's triage center is a 24/7, insurance-blind, walk-in crisis center for anyone needing on-demand mental health and substance use assessment, referral, or crisis response. We are a less costly, less restrictive hospital alternative, providing services in a tranquil, trauma-informed, person-centered setting with minimal wait times – generally between 10 and 45 minutes – and highly trained and specialized staff.

BH Link's services include psychiatric assessment and medication; detoxification from substances; risk assessment and safety planning; basic needs support; and direct admission to levels of care including detox, crisis stabilization, and residential. Clients can remain at the facility for up to 23 hours.

All told, BH Link and 988 improve client outcomes; alleviate burdens on overcrowded hospitals and on police, fire, and EMS; and support the behavioral healthcare system at large by making referrals to providers and treatment facilities statewide.

Thank you for considering these life-saving programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Anderson'.

Katherine K. Anderson
Vice President, Acute Services
Community Care Alliance