

To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Marianne Gibson, Vice President, Youth, Crisis and Workforce Policy

Date: March 24, 2026

Re: Support for S.3058 - 988 Call Center and BH Link Operations Act

Chair Murray, Vice Chair Lauria, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Inseparable, a national mental health policy and advocacy organization, we thank you for the opportunity to express our support for S.3058 - the 988 Call Center and BH Link Operations Act. This bill establishes a clear operational and governance framework for Rhode Island's 988 call center and BH Link crisis response system.

Rhode Island's Need for a Strong, Coordinated Crisis System

Rhode Island has made important progress in building out its behavioral health crisis continuum, including the launch of BH Link and implementation of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. However, as demand for crisis services continues to grow, the long-term system stability depends on a clearly defined operational structure and dedicated funding approach.

A well-functioning crisis system depends on more than just a hotline; it requires a coordinated infrastructure that ensures individuals can move seamlessly from initial contact to appropriate, in-person stabilization and follow-up care. Gaps in governance, funding reliability, or system coordination can undermine that continuum and limit the effectiveness of otherwise strong services. In practice, those gaps can lead to longer wait times, missed connections to care, and greater reliance on emergency departments.

S.3058 is a Step in the Right Direction

S.3058 begins to address these risks by establishing a clearer and more accountable framework for how Rhode Island's crisis system operates. This legislation requires an independent 988 call center focused exclusively on crisis response, clarifies allowable uses of funding, and reinforces coordination between the call center and BH Link. These changes help reduce fragmentation and support Rhode Island's existing crisis infrastructure.

At the same time, long-term success will depend on sustainable financing. While S.3058 strengthens the system's structure, it does not establish a dedicated funding mechanism. States across the country, including Virginia and Maryland, have adopted 988 telecommunications fees to provide stable, ongoing support for both call center operations and mobile crisis response services.

Establishing a dedicated funding stream that supports the full crisis continuum is critical to ensure Rhode Island's system can meet growing demand and operate reliably over time.

Bottom Line

S.3058 is an important step toward a more coordinated and accountable crisis response system in Rhode Island, laying the groundwork for long-term sustainability. **Inseparable respectfully urges the committee to support S.3058.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Gibson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Mariane Gibson
Vice President, Youth, Crisis and Workforce Policy