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Chairperson Murray and members of the Senate Health and Human Services committee,

My name is Dayna Gladstein, and I am the President and CEO of Newport Mental Health. I am submitting testimony in support of SB3058, the *988 Call Center and BH Link Operations Act*. This legislation represents a key step in safeguarding a full behavioral health crisis safety net. Solidifying a service like 988, that works as a key entry point to care for Rhode Islanders into that continuum with programs like Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC's).

This legislation recognizes that we must invest in the entire infrastructure of behavioral health, rather than trying to solve crises with temporary fixes. When someone reaches out in crisis, they need more than a voice on the phone. They need a system that can connect them to immediate stabilization, in-person care when necessary, and follow-up support so no one is left navigating the system alone. Just as importantly, this legislation makes clear that we treat mental health emergencies with the same urgency as physical health emergencies.

This bill strengthens 988 as a reliable, easy-to-use resource, building on the national framework established under the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020. Every Rhode Islander can reach trained professionals 24/7. If passed, this also ensures the administration has a mandate to support this critical service, instructing the director of BHDDH to designate and fully fund both 988 and BH Link.

The later of those programs, BH Link, is also highlighted as a dedicated space for individuals experiencing behavioral health crises, weaving another thread into the safety net of care. If passed, this legislation ensures these programs operate as one coordinated system, where a call becomes a clear pathway to care in their community, when they need it.

Rhode Island has already begun shifting toward a more proactive, coordinated behavioral health system. Our organization, Newport Mental Health, works closely with the teams behind BH Link, the 988 Crisis line, and all the other CCBHC's to make sure no one falls through the cracks. This bill protects that progress and strengthens connections to services here in Rhode Island.

Perhaps the most important point of all, a commitment to the 988 Crisis line ensures that no Rhode Islander faces a mental health crisis alone. And so, they know that when they reach out, the system is in place to help in a meaningful way.

For these reasons, I urge you to support SB3058 and its companion bill in the House.

Respectfully submitted,

Dayna Gladstein,

LICSW President & CEO



Newport Mental Health