



July 17, 2023

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chair, House Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2308 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member, House Appropriations Cmte.
U.S. House of Representatives
2413 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs Granger and Murray, Ranking Member DeLauro and Vice Chair Collins:

Our organizations share a commitment to reimagining our national response to people experiencing a mental health, suicide, or substance use crisis. Together, we represent people with mental health conditions and substance use disorders and their families, individuals affected by suicide, health care and emergency response professionals, advocates for civil and disability rights, law enforcement, and others dedicated to helping people in crisis get the help they need and deserve. We thank you for your continued bipartisan support of mental health, suicide prevention and substance use programs.

This month, our country marks the one-year anniversary of nationwide availability of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (“988”), a number for a person to contact in a mental health, substance use, or suicidal crisis. Thanks to Congress’ leadership, 988 has been able to respond to millions of contacts in the first year alone, helping countless people who reach out on the worst day of their lives. To fulfill the bold promise of 988 – that every person in a mental health crisis gets a mental health response – we need continued Congressional support to build and sustain critical investments in the full mental health crisis care continuum, including 24/7 call centers answering 988 contacts, mobile crisis teams, and crisis stabilization services.

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline will answer an estimated six million contacts this year—a roughly 40 percent increase over last year. Demand is anticipated to grow by another 50 percent (nine million contacts) in 2024. For many individuals, their call, text, or chat to 988 is the intervention they need most: someone to talk to. Some help seekers may need more support than can be provided over the phone, and programs like the Mental Health Crisis Response Partnership Pilot Program are enabling behavioral health-focused in-person response options in communities across the country.

However, just as more people are becoming aware of 988 and the hope it provides, returning to FY 2022 funding levels for these programs would have disastrous implications and constrain the 988 Lifeline’s ability to provide life-saving support to everyone who needs it. We recognize our nation faces significant challenges and that funding is limited. As you finalize FY 2024 appropriations, we urge you to continue to make mental health care a key national priority. Building on FY 2023 appropriations for 988 and mobile crisis response will solidify Congress’ bipartisan commitment to mental health crisis services and help ensure these resources able to meet the expected continued growth in demand.

Lives are at risk if someone contacts 988 and can’t connect to help quickly. Congress’ ongoing investment in these critical programs will help stem the rising rates of suicide and overdose deaths in our country while ensuring that every person in crisis can receive the help they need and deserve.

We sincerely appreciate your continued leadership and dedication to addressing mental health, substance use, and suicide prevention needs in our country and, in particular, your work to ensure access to care for individuals in crisis. Thank you for your consideration of this critical request. If you would like to discuss this issue further, please contact Hannah Wesolowski, Chief Advocacy Officer at the National Alliance on Mental Illness, at hwesolowski@nami.org.

Sincerely,

American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association for Community Psychiatry (AAP)
American Association for Emergency Psychiatry
American Association on Health and Disability
American College of Emergency Physicians
American Counseling Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Music Therapy Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare (AABH)
Association of Behavioral Health and Wellness
Autism Society of America
Behavioral Health Foundation
BIPOC Equity Agency
Centerstone
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
Children's Hospital Association
Connections Health Solutions
Crisis Text Line
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Fountain House
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Inseparable
Lakeshore Foundation
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association (NAAPIMHA)
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors,
NACBHDD
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Council for Mental Wellbeing
Pandemic Patients
Police, Treatment, and Community Collaborative
Psychotherapy Action Network
REDC Consortium
RI International

SMART Recovery
Solari Crisis & Human Services
Steinberg Institute
The Kennedy Forum
The Trevor Project
Trust for America's Health
Vibrant Emotional Health