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| F R O M | Name & Title | Dr. Letitia Dzirasa, Commissioner | Health Department AGENCY REPORT |  |
| | Agency Name & Address | Health Department 1001 E. Fayette Street Baltimore, Maryland 21201 | | |
| | Subject/ Position: | 22-0127R – Informational Hearing – 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Favorable | | |

To: President and Members
of the City Council
c/o 409 City Hall

October 26, 2022

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is pleased to have the opportunity to review Council Bill #22-0127R, entitled, “Informational Hearing – 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.” The purpose of this resolution is to invite representatives from various agencies and other interested parties to appear before the City Council to discuss the implementation of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, its anticipated impact on individuals that use this resource and the implementation plan for Baltimore City.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suicide is a growing problem in the United States. Suicide is a leading cause of death in the United States, with 45,979 deaths in 2020, which is about 11 deaths per minute. In children ages 10-14 and adults 25-34, suicide was the second leading cause of death in 2020. The CDC reports that thoughts of suicide, as well as attempts, outpace suicides themselves. While 90% of suicide attempts occur without a death, the impact of suicides is far reaching.¹ In Baltimore City, between 2011-2020, an average of 54 people died from suicide each year. Eleven percent of suicide deaths occurred in youth 15-24 years old. In Baltimore City, the highest suicide rates occur in 25-34 and 35-44 year olds.²

As a result of Council Bill 21-0103, BCHD is in the process of hiring it’s first-ever Suicide Prevention Coordinator. Once hired, the coordinator, working within BCHD’s Office of Youth and Trauma Services (OYTS), will play a critical role in collaborating with partners to support systems that are working to prevent suicides. The coordinator will guide, analyze, and propose modifications and improvements in programs focused on suicide prevention and will work as part of a taskforce to develop a plan of action to reduce suicides in Baltimore City. While we recruit for the coordinator, the OYTS team has already begun laying the groundwork for this initiative through meeting and collaborating with our Local Behavioral Health Authority, Behavioral Health System Baltimore, and analyzing recent data and trends.

Additionally, across the agency, our programs promote and refer to the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. For example, our Healthcare on the SPOT van offers 988 to any client they feel is at risk of a behavioral health crisis. We have also partnered with Baltimore Crisis Response, Inc.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (access Oct. 2022). <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/facts/index.html>.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (accessed Oct. 2022)
<https://wonder.cdc.gov/controller/saved/D76/D306F755>

(BCRI) to come out to the van to do evaluations and transport people to treatment. Our Sexual Health Clinics also offer 988 to clients who are thought to be at risk in the course of their visit. When there are pain clinic closures, we refer individuals to 988 as a resource if they need assistance finding a new provider. We also refer individuals we work with like older adults, clients of our syringe services program, and others to 988, as needed. We also promote the 988 number on our website.

BCHD staff sit on collaborative groups that address crisis and suicide prevention. BCHD staff are a part of the Suicide Prevention Legislative Workgroup and are expanding our membership on that workgroup. Additionally, we have staff that participate in the 911 Behavioral Health Diversion project weekly quality assurance calls. This project works to divert calls from law enforcement to BHSB, when the caller is experiencing a behavioral health crisis. Many of the calls are from persons threatening suicide or from other parties concerned about someone threatening suicide.

For the above reasons, BCHD urges a **favorable** report on Council Bill #22-0127R. We will be present at the informational hearing and available to answer any questions.