

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 22-0127R
(First Reader)**

Introduced by: Councilmember McCray

Introduced and read first time: August 15, 2022

Assigned to: Health, Environment, and Technology Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: City Solicitor, Department of Finance, Baltimore Police Department, Baltimore City Fire Department, Baltimore City Health Department

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing - 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline**

3 FOR the purpose of inviting representatives from the Baltimore City Health Department, the
4 Baltimore City Fire Department, the Baltimore Police Department, the Department of
5 Finance, the Baltimore City Law Department, and other interested parties to appear before the
6 City Council to discuss the implementation of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, its
7 anticipated impact on individuals that use this resource, and the implementation plan for
8 Baltimore City.

9 **Recitals**

10 The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline launched nationally on Saturday, July 16, 2022. The
11 Lifeline is the product of the federal National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020, a law
12 aimed at creating a pathway to mental health care that is easy for those in need to access. The
13 Act seeks to offer individuals who dial 988 the same level of attention and care for suicidal
14 ideation and mental health emergencies as those who call 911 for medical emergencies. Ideally,
15 an individual who contacts 988 will quickly be connected to a trained crisis counselor who will
16 provide support to the individual and dispatch a mobile crisis response unit, if necessary, to take
17 the individual to a crisis stabilization location.

18 In light of its recent rollout, it is imperative that the public understands what the Lifeline
19 offers and what to expect when engaging with the Lifeline. When an individual needs assistance,
20 the individual can contact the Lifeline via text, phone, or chat. With proper resources, the
21 individual should be connected to a crisis counselor immediately; however, current call center
22 staffing numbers may necessitate a queue before connecting an individual to a crisis counselor.
23 Ideally, an in-person response team that includes a trained mental health professional will be
24 available to respond to the individual in need, if necessary. An individual experiencing an
25 extreme mental health crisis should then be transported safely and expeditiously to a specialized
26 facility that can properly treat, observe, and care for them. If such a facility is not available,
27 which is an unfortunate reality given the current state of nationwide mental health resources, an
28 individual who calls 988 may be taken to a hospital or emergency department to receive
29 immediate care.

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS indicate matter added to existing law.
[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

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1 The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline has the potential to revolutionize how we provide
2 resources for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. An effective, fully-funded system
3 will reduce barriers to accessing help and ensure that equitable care is available to everyone,
4 regardless of their background or socioeconomic status.

5 While the purpose of the Lifeline is commendable, the logistics of its nationwide rollout have
6 been hampered by a lack of staff, resources, follow-through, and consistent federal funding. This
7 is the beginning of an important new phase in mental health care and communities should be
8 equipped to handle the needs of their residents, reduce reliance on the police and hospitals for
9 mental health crises, and deliver timely and effective help to people in crisis.

10 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the City
11 Council invites representatives from the Baltimore City Health Department, the Baltimore City
12 Fire Department, the Baltimore Police Department, the Department of Finance, the Baltimore
13 City Law Department, and other interested parties to appear before the City Council to discuss
14 the implementation of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, its anticipated impact on individuals
15 that use this resource, and the implementation plan for Baltimore City.

16 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Commissioner
17 of Health, the Chief of the Fire Department, the Police Commissioner, the Director of Finance,
18 the City Solicitor, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the Baltimore City Council.