

## 2022 Legislative Session – NAMI Maryland Update – Week #1

The legislative session kicked off on Wednesday, January 12, 2022. As always, this session will be a 90-day sprint to get good bills passed, advocate for policies, programs, and funding to help individuals with mental illness and their loved ones. Like the past three years, this session brings with it procedural changes and additional uncertainty due to the pandemic. For the most part, activities will be virtual (including our annual Advocacy Day – [sign up now!](#)). Politics may influence the policy work in Annapolis more than usual, because 2022 is both an election year AND when the legislature is charged with redistricting – drawing the maps which define our legislative and Congressional representative districts.

What's NAMI Maryland working on this session? Well, we have four major policy areas of focus:

- Early Intervention
- Access to Treatment and Services
- Reducing Racial Health Disparities
- Strengthening Maryland's Crisis Response System

You can take an in-depth look at our priorities here and our platform [here](#).

We already anticipate several bills that fall under one (or more) of our priorities above. Since bills are coming in at a trickle this week, let's focus on one that will be a major issue for NAMI Maryland all session long: **988**.

### *What is 988?*

It is the new, easy-to-remember phone number for the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**. The Lifeline provides free, 24/7, confidential emotional support by phone, text, or chat to people in suicidal crisis or other emotional distress. People who contact the Lifeline are routed to local behavioral health crisis call centers where trained staff provide supportive counseling and other resources. It is not only about answering calls but also about providing connection to community mental health and substance use services at critical moments for people across Maryland.

### *When will 988 launch?*

988 goes live in July 2022. Beginning then, all phone companies will route 988 calls to local behavioral health crisis call centers that are a part of the Lifeline network. National and state leaders are preparing for this change and using it as an opportunity to transform the crisis response system overall.

### *Why do we need 988?*

This number will benefit our communities, make it safer for those in crisis to seek help, and provide communities with additional access to lifesaving services.

A mental health crisis should be met with a mental health response, and 988 is a critical step towards making that reality. NAMI.org has more information about 988 nationally and NAMI Maryland will be providing additional updates about the bill, opportunities to testify and learn more.

### *Key Dates and Deadlines:*

- Register for Advocacy Day by **Wednesday, February 2nd, 2022** [REGISTER NOW](#).
- [Training webinar](#): **Thursday, January 20th @ 6:30 pm**
- Materials: (talking points, meeting background, relevant bills) will be delivered via email to affiliates and all registrants on **Friday, Feb 4th** so you have the weekend to review prior to Advocacy Day.