

2022 Legislative Session – NAMI Maryland Update – Report #2

This week, NAMI Maryland will be offering testimony in strong support of [HB 293](#), legislation that will officially establish 9-8-8 to be the phone number for Maryland's suicide prevention and behavioral health crisis hotline and creates a Trust Fund to support existing behavioral health crisis call centers in Maryland.

When it comes to mental health crises, one call can save a life, which is why we need to make that call as quick and simple as possible. Just as 9-1-1 is universally known for use during emergencies, like a heart attack or car accident, we need 9-8-8 for people experiencing a mental health crisis. The Senate bill hearing is slated for next week.

In the past few weeks, NAMI Maryland offered supportive testimony on the following bills:

- **[SB 2 \(Augustine\)](#)/[HB 32 \(Bagnall\)](#) Mental Health Law – Petitions for Emergency Evaluation – Electronic Record.** This is a simple bill to bring the emergency petition process into the 21st century by permitting the use of digital signatures to ensure that individuals can be admitted to the hospital in a timely manner.
 - NAMI Maryland supports this legislation because it will provide greater certainty for people experiencing mental health crises and their loved ones during a process that can often be scary and traumatic – especially if an individual needs to travel far from home to find an in-patient bed. Like any other health crisis, it's important to address a mental health emergency quickly and effectively. Unpredictability is the nature of mental illness, and this change will make a difficult time a bit smoother for individuals and their families.
- **[SB 12 \(Augustine\)](#)/[HB 129 \(Charkoudian\)](#) Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services and Public Safety Answering Points – Modifications.** This bill does two important things:
 - It would require that local government mobile crisis teams that minimize the role of law enforcement in crisis interactions and response, strengthening the existing Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program to ensure Maryland is investing in programs and services that address mental health emergencies FIRST.
 - This legislation helps pave the way toward 988 implementation (coming July 2022) by requiring public safety answering points (the call center where emergency 911 calls are routed) by asking the PSAPs to create a written protocol for mental health crisis calls that come in. The protocol is required to include the resources that are available for dispatch (CIT/mobile crisis units/other mental health and/or law enforcement resources).
 - We are advocating for this legislation to be voted on favorably in the Senate Finance Committee and the House Health and Government Operations Committee.

- NAMI Maryland is also advocating with our partners in the Behavioral Health Coalition in support of the **Behavioral Health System Modernization Act**, a sweeping proposal to put the mental health and wellness of Marylanders – including our children and youth – first. The bill is still in drafting. More details to come!
- Finally, we're preparing to support a **primary priority of the Parity Coalition** in committee, covering briefings on harm reduction, ongoing provider issues with Optum, and attending subcommittee meetings to advocate for passage of the above legislation.

The legislature has about a week to finalize all their bill introductions, and NAMI Maryland will continue to provide updates about our efforts on behalf of our 11 local affiliates and statewide network of more than 55,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations, and service providers.

Key Dates and Deadlines:

- Register for Advocacy Day by **Wednesday, February 2nd, 2022** [REGISTER NOW](#)
- If you missed the training webinar on Thursday, January 20th, [watch the recording now!](#)
- 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.