



AB 988 – The Miles Hall Act 9-8-8 Suicide and Mental Health Crisis Hotline

Summary

AB 988 creates a new easy-to-remember three-digit phone line, 988, as the new 911 for suicidal and immediate mental health crises. With 988, callers will be connected with around-the-clock intervention, including mobile crisis teams staffed by trained mental health professionals and trained peers instead of law enforcement.

Problem

California is facing a mental health crisis. One in 6 Californians now live with a mental illness and suicides have been steadily climbing, increasing by 35% nationally over the last two decades. This tragic trend has only been exacerbated by COVID-19.

For decades, California has failed to provide necessary mental health crisis services amidst this growing mental health crisis. As a result, the police and the criminal justice system as a whole often serve as the state’s default mental health provider. Currently, 10% of law enforcement agencies’ budgets – and 20% of staff time – are spent responding to individuals with mental illness.

As a direct consequence of our overreliance on law enforcement responses to a public health crisis, approximately 25% of all individuals killed in police-involved shootings since 2015 had a known mental illness, with black men dying disproportionately.

In 2019, Miles Hall, a 23-year-old black man living in Walnut Creek, was in the midst of a schizophrenic mental health crisis when his family called 911 for help. Despite being familiar with Miles’ condition, the officers resorted to lethal force within a minute of their arrival.

Law enforcement officers are not mental health experts and should not be expected to serve this role. A better system for Miles and all Californians is possible – one that leads with treatment, not law enforcement.

Background

Last year, both chambers of Congress unanimously passed, and the President signed historic legislation, the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act, establishing 988 as the new three-digit alternative to 911 for suicidal and immediate mental health crisis response. Before July 2022, when 988 goes live, states must create a framework to receive and respond to calls.

What this bill does

AB 988 implements the national 988 system in California so that all people experiencing a mental health crisis are able to receive life-saving care. Under this bill, the 988 system in California will be implemented in a phased-in approach over 5 years, allowing the state to thoughtfully scale existing crisis services while meeting federally established deadlines.

AB 988 will connect, expand, and integrate three critical pillars of mental health crisis continuums of care:

- 24/7 access to crisis counseling through call, text, and chat;
- The deployment of mobile crisis teams, staffed by trained mental health professionals and peers, to respond to crises instead of law enforcement; and
- Access to crisis receiving and stabilization services, so that individuals in a mental health crisis aren’t left to languish in our emergency rooms and jails.

The National Suicide Hotline Designation Act authorized states to assess a user fee on mobile phone, landline, and other access line bills to fund the “efficient and effective routing of calls, personnel, and the provision of acute mental health, crisis outreach and stabilization services.” This is the same way 911 is funded nationwide.

The user fee established in AB 988 uses the same model of determining the rate as California's 911 fee. Each year, the Office of Emergency Services will determine the annual budget for operating 988, seek approval from the Legislature, and divide the approved budget by the number of access lines to get the rate, which cannot exceed \$0.80 per line per month. The user fee may not be used to supplant existing public funding for mental health crisis services and may only cover services that are not reimbursable through insurance. AB 988 exempts low-income Californians from paying the user fee.

AB 988 follows Congressional guidelines to assess a user fee to ensure universal access to high quality compassionate mental health crisis services.

Support

County of Contra Costa (Sponsor)
County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors (Sponsor)
Mental Health America of California (Sponsor)
Miles Hall Foundation (Sponsor)
NAMI Contra Costa (Sponsor)
Steinberg Institute (Sponsor)
The Kennedy Forum (Sponsor)
Alameda County District Attorney's Office
Alameda County Network of Mental Health Clients
All of Us or None
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
Anti-Police Terror Project Sacramento
ASCRIBE Educational Consulting
Association of Regional Center Agencies
Autism Deserves Equal Coverage
Black Lives Matter Committee of the African American and Friends of Rossmoor
Bend The ARC: Jewish Action
Cal Voices
California Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychology
California Alliance of Child & Family Services
California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards & Commissions
California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists
California Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians
California Commission on Aging
California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls
California Democratic Party
California Downtown Association
California Federation of Teachers AFL-CIO
California First Response Transformation, Equity Advisory Committee
California Hawaii State Conference NAACP
California Judges Association

California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
California Psychological Association
California State Association of Psychiatrists
California State Council SEIU
California State PTA
Cal VOICES
City of Clayton
City of Concord
City of Cupertino
City of Davis
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City of Oakland
City of Oakley
City of Orinda
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Congregation B'Nai Tikvah
Council on American-Islamic Relations, Sacramento Valley
Decarcerate Sacramento
Democratic Party of Contra Costa
Democrats of Rossmoor
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance California
Didi Hirsch, National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Center
Disability Rights California
Economic Opportunity Council
Empower to Change
Everytown for Gun Safety Action Fund
Fountain House
Genup
Indivisible Resisters Walnut Creek
Jewish Family and Child Services of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties
Justice 2 Jobs Sacramento
Justice Unites Individuals & Communities Everywhere
League of California Cities
Libby Schaaf, Mayor of Oakland
LIVE FREE
Kelechi Ubozoh Consulting
Manzanita Services, Inc.
Mental Health & Autism Insurance Project
Mental Health Association of San Francisco
M.H. First Community First Response
Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America
Mobilize 4 Mental Health
Ms. Mable Sparrows Inc.
Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church Racial Justice Team
NAACP Youth Council

NAMI California
NAMI Greater Los Angeles County
NAMI of San Gabriel Valley
National Association of Social Workers California
National Union of Healthcare Workers
New Creation Church
NorCal Resist
North Los Angeles County Regional Center
Peninsula Temple Shalom
Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California
Power to Resist
Public Health Advocates
Re:Store Justice
Sacramento Area Congregations Together
Sacramento Street EMS, District 1
Sacramento Valley Psychological Association
San Diego County District Attorney's Office
San Francisco County Board of Supervisors
Shatterproof
Showing Up for Racial Justice Contra Costa County
Showing Up for Racial Justice Sacramento
Students Demand Action for Gun Sense in America
Social Justice Politicorps
Sunrise Movement Sacramento
Temple Akiba of Culver City
The California Association of Local Behavioral Health
Boards and Commissions
The Mamahood
The People's Budget Sacramento
The Trevor Project
Tides Advocacy
Town of Danville
Truth Love Justice
Well Being Trust
WellSpace, National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Center
Women's March Contra Costa
2,641 Individuals

Legislative Caucus Endorsements

LGBT Caucus
Jewish Caucus

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