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April 9, 2025

The Honorable Sen. Nicholas Scutari
Senate President
New Jersey State Legislature

The Honorable Assm. Craig Coughlin
Assembly Speaker
New Jersey State Legislature

The Honorable Sen. Anthony Bucco
Republican Leader
New Jersey State Legislature

The Honorable Assm. John DiMaio
Minority Leader
New Jersey State Legislature

RE: Support for 988 Fee to Sustain New Jersey's Mental Health Crisis Continuum of Care

Dear Senate President Scutari, Republican Leader Bucco, Assembly Speaker Coughlin, and Minority Leader DiMaio:

We, the undersigned advocacy organizations, write to strongly support the Governor's proposed \$0.40 fee on telephone lines to develop and maintain New Jersey's 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and crisis response services. With federal funds diminishing rapidly during a time of rising needs, establishing sustainable funding for crisis services has never been more important.

The Department of Human Services has been developing an evidence-based crisis continuum of care that gives families experiencing a mental health emergency "someone to talk to, someone to respond, and a safe place to go." Specifically, the Department has bolstered 988 Lifeline call centers (New Jersey received over 130,000 988 Lifeline contacts in 2024 alone) while also establishing Mobile Crisis Outreach Response Teams (MCORTs). Additional crisis response services in development include 23-hour Crisis Receiving and Stabilization Centers and Crisis Diversion Homes for support for up to 30 days.

To support this vital crisis continuum of care, the FY2026 budget assumes a fee on telephone lines, as envisioned by Congress when it established the national three-digit 988 Crisis & Suicide Lifeline number. A modest \$.40 monthly line fee would generate an estimated [\\$61 million](#) to fund these critical mental health crisis services, which prevent tragedies, reduce the strain on overburdened emergency departments and law enforcement, prevent costly hospitalizations, and provide timely support to individuals and families in crisis. Ten states, including Delaware and Maryland, have already enacted a 988 fee to support their mental health crisis continuums of care.

We urge the legislature to prioritize this proposal, which will save lives and demonstrate New Jersey's commitment to addressing the mental health needs of its residents.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration of this essential initiative.

Respectfully,

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