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Senate Finance Committee

March 4, 2025

*Senate Bill 900 – Maryland Behavioral Health Crisis Response System – Integration of 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Network and Outcome Evaluations*

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

On behalf of MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, and the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, we submit this letter of support for Senate Bill 900, which enhances the state's behavioral health crisis response by integrating the 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline into local crisis communication centers and establishing comprehensive outcome evaluations for crisis services. This legislation ensures that individuals in crisis have seamless access to immediate support, reducing delays in care and improving coordination across the state's behavioral health system.

By aligning Maryland's crisis communication centers with the 9-8-8 Lifeline, this bill will provide more effective crisis intervention, suicide prevention, and mental health support, ensuring that people in distress are connected to trained professionals quickly. This approach not only improves access to care but also helps reduce emergency department visits by addressing behavioral health emergencies within the community. Additionally, enhanced crisis intervention services will decrease law enforcement involvement in mental health crises, ensuring that individuals receive appropriate care rather than being placed in the criminal justice system.

The bill also mandates data collection and outcome evaluations to track call volume, response times, resolution rates, and the effectiveness of mobile crisis teams. These evaluations will provide valuable insights into the system's performance, allowing for data-driven improvements and more efficient resource allocation to better meet community needs. A favorable report would reinforce the state's commitment to accessible and high-quality behavioral health care.

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