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# Cárdenas Leads Introduction of Bipartisan 988 Implementation Act

## A year after the lifeline went live, new legislation would provide more resources for 988 crisis response infrastructure

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Today, **Congressman Tony Cárdenas (CA-29)** reintroduced the *988 Implementation Act* with **Congressmembers Brian Fitzpatrick (PA-01), Lisa Blunt Rochester (DE), Doris Matsui (CA-07), Seth Moulton (MA-06), Grace Napolitano (CA-31), Don Beyer (VA-08), and Jamie Raskin (MD-08)**. This comprehensive legislation will provide federal resources for states to implement their crisis response infrastructure one year after the launch of 988, the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

"The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline launched one year ago, and it is saving lives," **said Congressman Cárdenas**. "Since then, millions of callers have received crucial mental health care through the three-digit number, but we know that more resources are needed for the success of the lifeline. Answering a call from someone experiencing a mental health crisis is a great first step, but we must ensure that there's someone who can come provide more support if necessary, and somewhere to go if they need further care. That is why we need to fully invest in 988 and the broader mental health crisis care continuum at the federal level. My 988 Implementation Act will provide the support that we need to save more lives and improve the standard of crisis care across the country."

"Everyday, millions of Americans face mental challenges and are unsure where to go for help," **said Congressman Fitzpatrick**. "The 988 hotline streamlines resources for those in need, as part of a network of over 200 local crisis centers, yet only thirteen-percent of adults are aware of this critical resource. I am proud to join a bipartisan group of colleagues in introducing the *988 Implementation Act* to build upon the critical progress we have made, and further ensure that our communities are properly equipped with crisis-response services."

"As we mark one year since the introduction of the 988 crisis response service, it's critical that Congress continues our oversight and implementation efforts to ensure that every American gets help when they need it," **said Congresswoman Blunt Rochester**. "That's why I'm proud to join my colleagues in this bipartisan effort to continue to get the word out about 988 and ensure that the system is doing the work it was intended to do and getting crisis response services to Americans in need in a timely and effective manner."



our children to our friends and neighbors, we all know someone who is struggling and needs access to a robust network of resources and support. We must continue to expand our mental health infrastructure to ensure that all Americans are getting the care they need at the right place and right time. The 988 Implementation Act is critical to continuing our good work and supporting patients and providers with every tool available.”

“The first year of 9-8-8 exceeded my expectations. It helped millions of people get the emergency mental health help they needed in the moment, and millions more will benefit in the future,” said **Congressman Moulton**, who co-authored the bipartisan bill that created 9-8-8. “Now we need to ensure that 9-8-8 is equipped to grow and improve. Importantly, we need to make sure every American knows about the line and feels empowered to use it if they need it. I’m proud to re-introduce this bill with a bipartisan group of colleagues who are also committed to solving our mental health crisis.”

“With the one-year anniversary of 988, we must still ensure that a crisis services continuum—consisting of call centers, mobile crisis units, and crisis stabilizations programs—is solidified in all states. This immediate intervention increases the ability of individuals to recover from crises and assists to keep them out of future crises, and I am pleased our bill provides funding for the full crisis services continuum,” said **Congresswoman Napolitano**. “We must all continue to spread the word to individuals and the media, not only so they are aware of 988, but to help continue to reduce stigma. I am proud to join my colleagues in reintroducing this legislation to help save lives.”

“The continued success of 9-8-8 as a crucial lifeline to prevent suicide depends on support from Congress. In Virginia the 9-8-8 rollout has shown how essential it is to devote the resources and effort necessary to make this lifesaving system work the way we need it to,” said **Congressman Beyer**. “Our bipartisan bill would help sustain the progress made in the year since the launch of this vital mental health hotline, ensuring that we save as many lives as possible.”

“Our country faces a mental health crisis that has left millions of our people feeling alone and helpless,” said **Congressman Raskin**. “I’m proud to help reintroduce the bipartisan 988 Implementation Act, which will build on the progress we achieved last year in supporting our local crisis call centers by vastly expanding access to mental health crisis response teams. Thanks to Congressman Cárdenas for his passionate leadership in building our mental health crisis response infrastructure, and thanks to all my colleagues for their support of this urgently needed legislation.”

America is experiencing a growing mental health crisis. Suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in the U.S., and 2nd leading cause of death for people ages 10-34. In 2020, there was a 31% increase in mental health-related visits to emergency rooms in children aged 12 to 17. On average, there are 132 suicides per day.

While the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is taking a larger volume of calls, drastically cutting wait times, and helping people across the country, very few Americans are aware of it. A [Pew survey](#) found that only 18% of adults know about 988, a knowledge gap that the 988 Implementation Act aims to tackle.

For the callers that do know about, and seek help through 988, interactions can be lifesaving. But the work does not stop there; states are continuing to expand the crisis care continuum beyond call centers – including through mobile crisis response teams, and crisis stabilization centers – which is a crucial next step in establishing 988 as a nationally trusted number for mental health crises. These services are so essential in part because it allows the appropriate professionals to respond with the appropriate expertise and level of care. Most police officers are not trained to effectively respond to mental health emergencies, and relying on them to be the first emergency response increases the chances of violence. In fact, a police encounter with a civilian is 16 times more likely to result in that person’s death if they have an untreated mental illness. For one California mother, not having access to 988 and crisis services was the difference between life and death for her son:

“Having a system that didn’t rely on police to take care of mental health crises would have most likely saved my son, Miles Hall, who was killed on June 2, 2019, after we called 911 for assistance getting him to the hospital,” said **Taun Hall**. “This new legislation gives families like ours a chance for a medical response to mental health challenges instead of criminalization. I miss Miles every day and wish he was alive and enjoying his life. Thank you, Tony Cárdenas for creating this life-saving legislation which will give all states the federal support, guidance and funding to ensure public safety for all.”

that it's not just a number to call but a line to connect to services on the ground, including trained first responders and crisis centers.

The 988 Implementation Act:

- Solidifies funding for 988 regional and local call centers to ensure a timely 24/7 response to callers anywhere in the country.
- Provides funding for **community-based crisis response**, including **mobile crisis teams** and **crisis centers**.
- Supports **crisis workforce development** with increased funding for training and scholarship opportunities.
- Increases access to care by **requiring that all health insurance plans cover crisis services**.
- Implements a **national suicide prevention awareness campaign** in partnership with a wide array of stakeholders.

The legislation is supported by more than 60 organizations including mental health advocates, clinical and medical professionals, state and local government officials, civil rights advocates, veterans, and more.

"The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline has given us a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve our responses to people in mental health, substance use and suicide crises," **said Daniel H. Gillison Jr., Chief Executive Officer of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)**. "People in crisis need and deserve a mental health response – someone to talk to, someone to respond and a safe place to go. NAMI is grateful for the introduction of the 988 Implementation Act, which will provide the needed resources and infrastructure to help our communities fulfill the promise of 988."

"The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline successfully served millions more people than in years prior, **said Chuck Ingoglia, President and CEO of the National Council for Mental Wellbeing**. "Yet we still have a long way to go to ensure that our crisis care system provides people in every community with someone to respond and somewhere to go if we hope to fulfill the promise of 988. Mobile crisis response remains elusive in many communities, and the mental health and substance use crisis workforces face crippling shortages. Growing the workforce and expanding access to mobile crisis services nationwide will take significant investment. Expanding behavioral health workforce training programs, increasing support for mobile crisis response, and increasing awareness of 988 will allow us to improve the Lifeline in its second year and for years to come. This bill will help us accomplish those goals and will enable more people to access lifesaving care."

"AFSP applauds Rep. Cárdenas and Reps. Beyer, Blunt Rochester, Fitzpatrick, Matsui, Moulton, Napolitano and Raskin for their leadership in advancing lifesaving crisis care services through their introduction of the 988 Implementation Act," **said Laurel Stine, J.D., M.A., Executive Vice President and Chief Policy Officer at the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**. "This important legislation would enhance and help sustain the crisis care continuum by extending federal supports for the 988 Lifeline's infrastructure, so that anyone in crisis has someone to talk to, someone to respond, and a safe place to go when they need it. Importantly, the bill would also establish a national suicide prevention awareness campaign and support workforce development so that more people in mental health or suicide crisis can access the care they need. AFSP is proud to endorse the 988 Implementation Act and calls for its swift passage."

The 988 Implementation Act is endorsed by the following organizations:

American Association on Health and Disability; Lakeshore Foundation; Anxiety and Depression Association of America; American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work; Psychotherapy Action Network; National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI); RI International; National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors; Miles Hall Foundation; California Medical Association; American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP); Trust for America's Health; American Mental Health Counselors Association; American Counseling Association; Police, Treatment, and Community Collaborative (PTACC); American Paramedic Association; The Paramedic Foundation; Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance; The American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP); Centerstone; Wounded Warrior Project; The Kennedy Forum; Behavioral Health Link; Schizophrenia and Psychosis Action Alliance; Connections Health Solutions; Inseparable; The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health; International Association of Emergency Medical Services Chiefs; Detroit Disability Power; American Psychiatric Association (APA); Education Development Center; Postpartum Support International; the Illinois Association for



Association for Emergency Psychiatry; The Arc, Michigan; Treatment Advocacy Center; The American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR); National Association for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors (NAADAC); Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD); National Eating Disorders Association; Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance; The Crisis Residential Association; Steinberg Institute; Fountain House; National Council for Mental Wellbeing; First Focus on Children; American Occupational Therapy Association; Mental Health America; National Association of Social Workers; National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC); American Counseling Association; Children's Hospital Association; Vibrant; American Association of Suicidology\*

For a section by section and additional information on the 988 Implementation Act, click [here](#). Full bill text can be found [here](#).

\* List of endorsing organizations subject to additions.

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