



March 29, 2022

The Honorable Tony Cárdenas  
Rayburn House Office Building  
S. Capitol St. & Independence Ave SE, Rm. 2438  
Washington, DC 20515

**RE: H.R. 7116 – 9-8-8 Implementation Act of 2022 – SUPPORT**

Dear Congressman Cárdenas,

On behalf of the California State Association of Psychiatrists (CSAP), I write in support of your H.R. 7116, which would ensure states receive the federal funding necessary to implement their 988 crisis response infrastructure.

The ongoing mental health crisis in America has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and urgent action is necessary. Suicide is now the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death for people ages 10-34 behind accidents. However, there are evidence-based and community-driven measures that can and should be taken in order to bring care and relief to those experiencing severe mental illness or confronted with a mental health crisis. Congress recognized this in 2020 by approving 988 as a nationwide calling code for mental health emergencies, but its implementation will need more support.

Almost every state is struggling to implement 988 services for mental health emergencies without federal support. To be truly helpful, the 988 line must connect individuals in crisis with the continuum of mental health care in their community. 988 services need a 3-part approach in which an individual can get in contact with the hotline, get help from a mobile crisis team, and have access to crisis centers. Much like how 911 has a hotline, ambulances, and hospitals, 988 needs a hotline, trained mental health crisis teams, and crisis facilities. Funding for 988 services is needed separately from 911 services because Americans with untreated mental illness are 16 times more likely to be killed by law enforcement. Each state deserves the funding to provide its citizens with trained mental health crisis responders – separate from law enforcement.

The 9-8-8 Implementation Act addresses this need for community-based crisis response by providing funding for states to fully implement their 988 system. In addition, the bill supports crisis workforce development and allows all states the opportunity to establish certified community behavioral health clinics. The bill is also cost-effective. It costs 23% less for a mobile crisis team to respond to a crisis call instead of the police (in addition to being a safer option).

And finally, the 9-8-8 Implementation Act will revise the Institution for Mental Disease (IMD) exclusion under Medicaid, which would be an incredible tool for states and local governments who have struggled with this exclusion for far too long.

For these reasons, CSAP is pleased to support the 9-8-8 Implementation Act and would like to thank you for your authorship.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Yoder", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Paul Yoder  
Legislative Advocate