

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT**LD 1216 – An Act to Improve Behavioral Health Crisis Services and Suicide Prevention Services
Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

My name is Hannah Longly, and I represent NAMI Maine, the state's largest grassroots mental health advocacy organization. I am here to express our strong support for LD 1216, which would codify and strengthen Maine's 988 crisis response system—a critical resource for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis.

Maine was once a national leader in building a robust crisis response system, particularly after tragic events in Waterville in the late 1990s and early 2000s. We were one of the initial states to pioneer a statewide mental health crisis number, and our model was regarded as a gold standard. Today, we have an opportunity—through LD 1216—to begin to reclaim that leadership by formalizing the 988-crisis line.

Since the passage of federal legislation establishing 988, 27 states—with Virginia being the first—have codified its use. Maine has laid important groundwork, including transferring mental health calls from Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) to the 988 centers. As of now, 11 PSAPs have implemented these protocols, resulting in over 100 successful transfers—none of which were returned to law enforcement. That's not just a statistic; it's proof that 988 works.

Additionally, 47.5% of all mental health calls that law enforcement responded to in 2024 were stabilized on the scene and transferred to crisis services. This demonstrates that when properly resourced and integrated, 988 can divert individuals in crisis from emergency departments and the justice system toward the care they actually need.

LD 1216 ensures that Maine keeps pace with national best practices and provides consistency and formal support for the 988 system. It reflects a commitment to community-based crisis response and upholding the dignity of people experiencing mental health challenges.

Let's build on what we've started. Let's finish what we've begun. Passing LD 1216 means lives saved, families supported, and systems improved.

ABOUT NAMI MAINE: Founded in 1984, NAMI Maine is the state's leading mental health advocacy organization. We partner with leaders and community organizations to improve the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness through advocacy, education, and support.

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POSITIONS & POLICY AGENDA
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