

From the desk of Representative Tawna Sanchez

## 988 Implementation: Vote Yes on HB 2757

In 2021, the Oregon Legislature capitalized on the opportunity that 2020 federal legislation granted states to develop a robust 988 behavioral health crisis system. We used one-time funding to establish two 988 call centers and to plan the expansion of mobile crisis services across the state.

In short, we took the first steps necessary in 2021 to prepare Oregon to implement a 988 crisis system. In 2023, we propose to finish the job with House Bill 2757, which completes the final steps for implementing the full 988 crisis system architecture.

Before July 2022, when the 988 call system went live, the only recourse when a behavioral health crisis arose was to call 911 and hope for the best. The person answering the call had no particular behavioral health expertise and could not help people de-escalate and stabilize. Instead, the best they could do is dispatch a first responder.

But rather than an ambulance arriving, it would be law enforcement. You could only hope they were specially trained for crisis intervention. Even if they were, often the best they could offer is to help de-escalate. There was no health care intervention and no real stabilization.

HB 2757 will change how we respond in the future. Oregon will deploy an actual health care response to a health care crisis. Wherever someone calls from in Oregon, when they call 988, the person who answers can actually help. They answer quickly and they are highly trained.

When we do dispatch first responders, the mobile crisis teams showing up have the skills and expertise to assess and stabilize individuals and families in crisis. They truly are the behavioral health equivalent of emergency medical technicians.

HB 2757 ensures this transformation occurs in Oregon. The bill ensures a stable funding source for Oregon's two 988 call centers and injects an additional revenue stream to build out mobile crisis so that services are uniformly available 24/7 across the state.

Importantly, HB 2757:

- Establishes the 988 Trust Fund. There are various streams of one-time and ongoing federal and state funding that need to be braided so that our actions around 988 look and function like a system.
- Establishes a fee on telecom that functions just like our fee for 911.
- Restricts the fee to funding our call centers and some reliable baseline funding for mobile crisis. Both are essential core functions that cannot wax and wane with the economy.
- Creates a true multi-stakeholder advisory group to guide implementation and provide oversight as the 988 system develops.

Behavioral health is a pressing need in every corner of Oregon. HB 2757 helps us capitalize on a wonderful opportunity to build toward a true crisis response system in every community. We urge your support.

