

HB 2757B: Building Out Oregon's Crisis System

Background

In fall 2020, Congress designated 9-8-8 as the new three-digit crisis line for nationwide use, replacing the 10-digit toll-free number that connected callers to the National Suicide Prevention

Lifeline Network. Congress also gave states the option:

- To tie 988 to their broader in-state behavioral health crisis network.
- To adopt a telecom fee for 988, just as states have telecom fees to fund the 911 emergency network.

In 2021, the Oregon Legislature partially enacted 988 implementation legislation, moving forward with creating two 988 call centers based in Oregon and with partially expanding mobile crisis response teams across the state. However, several key elements were deferred until 2023 to ensure time for thoughtful planning.

What HB 2757 Achieves

HB 2757 fully implements the architecture for the 988 system in Oregon. 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 at 40-cents per line per month (\$4.80 per year) that functions just like Oregon's fee for 911.
- Restricts the 988 fee to funding Oregon's two 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.

B-Engrossed Version

The B-Engrossed version makes minor fixes and addresses concerns from cities that currently fund limited mobile crisis services. The amendment requires:

- That cities with current mobile crisis services have a pathway to access enhanced Medicaid funding to expand their services.
- That cities and Community Mental Health Programs enter into an MOU to ensure coordination and eliminate duplication — and to ensure that mobile crisis services are available uniformly across the county.
- That low-income households participating in the Oregon Lifeline subsidized telecom program be exempted from the monthly fee.



Fully Funding Oregon’s 988 System



Two essential elements of a crisis response system are the 988 call centers and mobile crisis — someone to call and someone to respond. It’s estimated that between the call centers and 24/7 mobile crisis teams, the vast majority of behavioral health crises can be resolved without further intervention and without law enforcement.

This requires fully funding each to ensure that all Oregon communities — whether frontier, rural, or urban — have trained responders on hand when a crisis strikes. Short of fully funding, law enforcement will remain the default first responder and emergency rooms and jails will continue as the most common interventions.

988/911 Fee Comparison

State	988 Fee	911 Fee	Ratio of 988 to 911 fee
Washington	0.40	0.95	42%
Nevada	0.35	set locally; up to 1.00	35%
California	0.30	0.80	38%
Colorado	0.30	0.10 statewide; 0.70-1.00 local	38-90%
Oregon (proposed)	0.40	1.25	32%

Note: States with 911 fee ranges and local options also adopted fee ranges for 988 that will rise to capped amount listed in table.

Oregon’s proposed 988 telecom fee at \$0.40 per month (\$4.80 per year) is comparable with neighboring states. Unlike other states, however, HB 2757 is explicitly reserved to only fund Oregon’s two 988 call centers and to inject an additional revenue stream to expand to 24/7 mobile crisis response across the state. It may not be used for any other purposes.

988 Call Centers

The volume of calls and texts to 988 in Oregon increased 50% since the 988 went live in July 2022. With national and local marketing efforts already underway, volume is expected to jump at least another 50% over the next year.

Callers are currently connected to Oregon’s major call center in 15-20 seconds on average, which is among the best in the nation. The cost to operate Oregon’s two call centers is estimated to be \$32.4 million for the 2023-25 biennium.

Mobile Crisis & Enhanced Medicaid Match

Very few communities currently have 24/7 mobile crisis coverage, meaning law enforcement is still the default first responder for behavioral health crises. But Oregon has an opportunity to expand mobile crisis to all Oregon communities if it qualifies for an enhanced Medicaid match currently set at 85%.

To qualify for the enhanced match, mobile crisis teams must be truly available 24/7 and must feature a two-person team of qualified crisis responders. This requires a combination of revenue streams to ensure mobile crisis is uniformly available across Oregon.