



AMERICAN  
**PSYCHIATRIC**  
ASSOCIATION



OREGON PSYCHIATRIC  
PHYSICIANS ASSOCIATION

April 27, 2023

Oregon House of Representatives  
Committee on Revenue  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem Oregon 97301

**RE: Support for HB 2757**

Dear Chair Nathanson, Vice Chair Reschke, and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), a national medical specialty society representing more than 38,000 psychiatric physicians, and the Oregon Psychiatric Physicians Association (OPPA), representing over 400 psychiatric physicians in the state, we write with enthusiastic support for HB 2757. If passed, this bill would help transform Oregon's crisis system and ensure that no matter where our patients live, they have access to equitable and timely care.

As medical experts in psychiatric care, we are acutely aware of how important it is to divert patients in crisis away from encounters with law enforcement and the emergency room and into care. This need has become much more apparent in the face of the pandemic and amidst a growing youth mental health crisis. Last summer, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline became nationally available and since then, has seen an exponential increase in calls, chats, and texts. The need for this helpline is projected to continue growing and it is critical for Oregon's legislature to take action to fund and implement important components of the overall 988 system – crisis call centers, mobile crisis teams, and crisis stabilization programs – at a local level.

We are grateful to the Oregon legislature for setting the groundwork for the state's 988 infrastructure over the last few years. HB 2757 goes one step further to establish a viable funding mechanism through a low monthly fee, similar to the fees associated with 911. States that have already established 988 fees have taken steps to ensure these resources will be used for 988 and not diverted for other purposes. Having a reliable source of funding that is not contingent on federal appropriation, changes in the economy, nor tied to insurance supports a 988 system that is able to sustainably provide services. Using a fee funding model also allows call centers to provide call, text, or chat services without callers providing their real name or billing information for insurance. The assurance of confidentiality can often make the difference between someone deciding to reach out for help or not.

When a patient is in crisis, every second counts. There are dire consequences to an underfunded 988 crisis response system. Every person in Oregon deserves to receive a mental health response to mental health crises, so we urge you to support HB 2757.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,

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CEO and Medical Director  
American Psychiatric Association

Amela Blekic, MD  
President  
Oregon Psychiatric Physicians Association