

2025 -- S 0892 SUBSTITUTE A

LC002632/SUB A

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

A N A C T

RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS -- 988 SUICIDE AND CRISIS
LIFELINE CALL CENTER FUNDING AND OPERATIONAL INDEPENDENCE

Introduced By: Senators Murray, DiPalma, Lawson, Tikoian, Felag, Gallo, DiMario,
Bissaillon, Lauria, and Valverde
Date Introduced: March 27, 2025

Referred To: Senate Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- SECTION 1. Title 39 of the General Laws entitled "PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:
- CHAPTER 21.3
- 988 CALL CENTER FUNDING AND OPERATIONS ACT
- 39-21.3-1. Legislative findings.**
- The general assembly finds that:
- (1) Access to suicide prevention and behavioral health crisis intervention is essential to protecting public health and safety;
- (2) Congress enacted the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020, which authorized states to implement and fund a 988 crisis hotline;
- (3) The State of Rhode Island must create a reliable, sustainable funding source to support its 988 call center infrastructure;
- (4) The designated 988 call center must operate independently from state agencies and focus exclusively on the core responsibilities of answering 988 calls, texts, and chats, consistent with federal law; and
- (5) Consolidating all applicable revenue sources into a single restricted receipt fund will ensure fiscal integrity and long-term sustainability.
- 39-21.3-2. Definitions.**

1 As used in this chapter:

2 (1) "988 call center" means the designated, non-governmental entity operating the federally
3 approved in-state contact center for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, exclusively
4 responsible for answering and responding to 988 contacts originating in Rhode Island.

5 (2) "988 fee" means the existing monthly surcharge levied on telecommunications services
6 to support the operation of 911 and/or first responder services, to include the 988 call center going
7 forward.

8 (3) "Lifeline administrator" means the entity that contracts with Substance Abuse and
9 Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to oversee all the two hundred plus (200+)
10 contact centers and ensures they meets all requirements.

11 (4) "Telecommunications provider" means any person or entity that provides commercial
12 mobile radio service, interconnected VoIP service, or wireless telecommunications service to end
13 users in the state.

14 (5) "Subscriber" means a person or entity billed for telecommunications services with a
15 service address in Rhode Island.

16 **39-21.3-3. 988 Call center – Restricted receipt account.**

17 (a) There is hereby established a restricted receipt account, known as the "988 call center
18 fund," to be held and administered by the state.

19 (b) The fund shall consist of:

20 (1) Revenue collected from the 988 fee established under this chapter;

21 (2) Legislative appropriations designated for 988 operations;

22 (3) Federal block grant allocations or other federal funds specifically allocated for 988 or
23 crisis hotline services; and

24 (4) Interest or investment income earned on monies deposited in the fund.

25 (c) The Rhode Island division of taxation shall deposit all remittances into the 988 call
26 center fund.

27 **39-21.3-4. Authorized uses of the trust fund.**

28 (a) Monies in the 988 call center fund shall be used to support the 988 call center budget
29 to:

30 (1) Operate, staff, and maintain the 988 call center;

31 (2) Acquire, upgrade, and maintain technology or telecommunications infrastructure for
32 988 call center use;

33 (3) Provide required training for call center staff in accordance with federal 988 program
34 standards; and

1 (4) Conduct public awareness and first responder outreach efforts about the availability
2 and use of 988.

3 (b) Monies shall not be used to:

4 (1) Deliver or fund behavioral health treatment, case management, or clinical services;

5 (2) Expand into service areas beyond those allowed by the National Suicide Hotline
6 Designation Act or implementing SAMHSA guidance; and

7 (3) Fund operations, staff, or administration of any state agency.

8 **39-21.3-5. Governance and independence of 988 call center operations.**

9 (a) The 988 call center shall be operated by a nonprofit entity approved by the Lifeline
10 Administrator designated by SAMHSA, by the general assembly or authorized by federal grant
11 requirements.

12 (b) The call center shall operate collaboratively with all Rhode Island executive
13 departments and shall not be subject to oversight, direction, or operational control by any sole state
14 agency.

15 (c) An advisory board may be established by the operator to promote compliance with
16 national standards and best practices. If an advisory board is established it shall consist of interested
17 parties representing children and adult behavioral health providers.

18 **39-21.3-6. Oversight and reporting.**

19 (a) The 988 call center operator shall submit an annual report to the general assembly by
20 February 1 of each year detailing:

21 (1) Revenue by category (fee, grant, appropriations, etc.);

22 (2) Expenditures by category (staffing, technology, training, etc.); and

23 (3) Service performance metrics (call volume, wait times, abandonments, etc.).

24 (b) The Rhode Island auditor general shall conduct an annual audit of the 988 call center
25 fund and provide the results to the speaker of the house and president of the senate and both the
26 house and senate finance committee chairs.

27 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

=====
LC002632/SUB A
=====

EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS -- 988 SUICIDE AND CRISIS
LIFELINE CALL CENTER FUNDING AND OPERATIONAL INDEPENDENCE

- 1
- This act would establish a restricted receipt account, known as the "988 Call Center Fund,"
- 2
- to be held and administered by the state to support the 988 call center budget. The funds would
- 3
- support operations and maintenance of the 988 call center, acquisition and maintenance of
- 4
- technology, training for staff, and outreach efforts.
- 5
- This act would take effect on July 1, 2026.

=====
LC002632/SUB A
=====