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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS -- 988 CALL CENTER FUNDING
AND OPERATIONS ACT

Introduced By: Representatives Shallcross Smith, Casey, Cruz, Solomon, Casimiro,
Fellela, Messier, Dawson, Ajello, and Biah

Date Introduced: February 27, 2026

Referred To: House Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Legislative findings.

2 The general assembly finds that:

3 (1) Access to suicide prevention and behavioral health crisis intervention is essential to
4 protecting public health and safety;

5 (2) Congress enacted the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020, which
6 authorized states to implement and fund a 988 crisis hotline;

7 (3) The State of Rhode Island must create a reliable, sustainable funding source to support
8 its 988 call center infrastructure;

9 (4) The designated 988 call center must operate independently from state agencies and
10 focus exclusively on the core responsibilities of answering 988 calls, texts, and chats, consistent
11 with federal law; and

12 (5) Consolidating all applicable revenue sources into a single restricted receipt fund will
13 ensure fiscal integrity and long-term sustainability.

14 SECTION 2. Title 39 of the General Laws entitled "PUBLIC UTILITIES AND
15 CARRIERS" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

16 CHAPTER 21.3

17 988 CALL CENTER FUNDING AND OPERATIONS ACT

18 39-21.3-1. 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 monthly surcharge levied on telecommunications services to
6 support the operation of 911 and/or first responder services and the 988 call center.

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

10 (4) "Operator" means the nonprofit entity designated to oversee the 988 call center pursuant
11 to § 39-21.3-4.

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

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

17 **39-21.3-2. 988 Call center – Restricted receipt account.**

18 (a) There is hereby established a restricted receipt account, known as the "988 call center
19 fund," to be held and administered by the office of the general treasurer.

20 (b) The fund shall consist of:

21 (1) Revenue collected from the 988 fee established pursuant to § 39-21.1-14;

22 (2) Legislative appropriations designated for 988 operations;

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

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

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

28 **39-21.3-3. Authorized uses of the trust fund.**

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

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

32 (2) Acquire, upgrade, and maintain technology or telecommunications infrastructure for
33 988 call center use;

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

1 standards; and

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

4 (b) Monies shall not be used to:

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

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

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

9 **39-21.3-4. Governance and independence of 988 call center operations.**

10 (a) The 988 call center shall be operated by a nonprofit entity appointed by the general
11 assembly and approved by the lifeline administrator designated by SAMHSA in accordance with
12 federal grant requirements.

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

16 (c) The operator may establish an advisory board to promote compliance with national
17 standards and best practices. An advisory board, if established at the direction of the operator, shall
18 consist of professionals with expertise in children, adolescent, and adult behavioral health.

19 **39-21.3-5. Oversight and reporting.**

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

22 (1) Revenue by category including, but not limited to, 988 fees, grants, and appropriations;

23 (2) Expenditures by category including, but not limited to, staffing, training, and
24 technology; and

25 (3) Service performance metrics including, but not limited to, call volume, wait times, and
26 abandonments.

27 (b) The Rhode Island auditor general shall conduct an annual audit of the 988 call center
28 fund and provide the results to the speaker of the house; the president of the senate; the house of
29 representatives finance committee chair; and the senate finance committee chair.

30 SECTION 3. Section 35-4-27 of the General Laws in Chapter 35-4 entitled "State Funds"
31 is hereby amended to read as follows:

32 **35-4-27. Indirect cost recoveries on restricted receipt accounts.**

33 Indirect cost recoveries of fifteen percent (15%) of cash receipts shall be transferred from
34 all restricted receipt accounts, to be recorded as general revenues in the general fund. However,

1 there shall be no transfer from cash receipts with restrictions received exclusively: (1) From
2 contributions from nonprofit charitable organizations; (2) From the assessment of indirect cost-
3 recovery rates on federal grant funds; or (3) Through transfers from state agencies to the department
4 of administration for the payment of debt service. These indirect cost recoveries shall be applied to
5 all accounts, unless prohibited by federal law or regulation, court order, or court settlement. The
6 following restricted receipt accounts shall not be subject to the provisions of this section:

7 Executive Office of Health and Human Services
8 HIV Care Grant Drug Rebates
9 Health System Transformation Project
10 Rhode Island Statewide Opioid Abatement Account
11 HCBS Support-ARPA
12 HCBS Admin Support-ARPA
13 Department of Human Services
14 Organ Transplant Fund
15 Veterans' home — Restricted account
16 Veterans' home — Resident benefits
17 Pharmaceutical Rebates Account
18 Demand Side Management Grants
19 Veteran's Cemetery Memorial Fund
20 Donations — New Veterans' Home Construction
21 Commodity Supplemental Food Program-Claims
22 Department of Health
23 Pandemic medications and equipment account
24 Miscellaneous Donations/Grants from Non-Profits
25 State Loan Repayment Match
26 Healthcare Information Technology
27 Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals
28 Eleanor Slater non-Medicaid third-party payor account
29 Hospital Medicare Part D Receipts
30 RICLAS Group Home Operations
31 Group Home Facility Improvement Fund
32 Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
33 Emergency and public communication access account
34 Department of Environmental Management

1 National heritage revolving fund
2 Environmental response fund II
3 Underground storage tanks registration fees
4 De Coppet Estate Fund
5 Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission
6 Historic preservation revolving loan fund
7 Historic Preservation loan fund — Interest revenue
8 Department of Public Safety
9 E-911 Uniform Emergency Telephone System
10 Forfeited property — Retained
11 [988 Call Center Fund](#)
12 Forfeitures — Federal
13 Forfeited property — Gambling
14 Donation — Polygraph and Law Enforcement Training
15 Rhode Island State Firefighter’s League Training Account
16 Fire Academy Training Fees Account
17 Attorney General
18 Forfeiture of property
19 Federal forfeitures
20 Attorney General multi-state account
21 Forfeited property — Gambling
22 Department of Administration
23 Health Insurance Market Integrity Fund
24 RI Health Benefits Exchange
25 Information Technology restricted receipt account
26 Restore and replacement — Insurance coverage
27 Convention Center Authority rental payments
28 Investment Receipts — TANS
29 OPEB System Restricted Receipt Account
30 Grants Management Administration
31 Office of Energy Resources
32 OER Reconciliation Funding
33 RGGI Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council Projects
34 Electric Vehicle Charging Stations Operating and Maintenance Account

1 Clean Transportation Programs
2 Department of Housing
3 Housing Resources and Homelessness Restricted Receipt Account
4 Housing Production Fund
5 Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Fund
6 Department of Revenue
7 Car Rental Tax/Surcharge-Warwick Share
8 DMV Modernization Project
9 Jobs Tax Credit Redemption Fund
10 Legislature
11 Audit of federal assisted programs
12 Department of Children, Youth and Families
13 Children's Trust Accounts — SSI
14 Military Staff
15 RI Military Family Relief Fund
16 RI National Guard Counterdrug Program
17 Treasury
18 Admin. Expenses — State Retirement System
19 Retirement — Treasury Investment Options
20 Defined Contribution — Administration - RR
21 Violent Crimes Compensation — Refunds
22 Treasury Research Fellowship
23 Business Regulation
24 Banking Division Reimbursement Account
25 Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner Reimbursement Account
26 Securities Division Reimbursement Account
27 Commercial Licensing and Racing and Athletics Division Reimbursement Account
28 Insurance Division Reimbursement Account
29 Historic Preservation Tax Credit Account
30 Rhode Island Cannabis Control Commission
31 Marijuana Trust Fund
32 Social Equity Assistance Fund
33 Judiciary
34 Arbitration Fund Restricted Receipt Account

1 Third-Party Grants
2 RI Judiciary Technology Surcharge Account
3 Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
4 Statewide Student Transportation Services Account
5 School for the Deaf Fee-for-Service Account
6 School for the Deaf — School Breakfast and Lunch Program
7 Davies Career and Technical School Local Education Aid Account
8 Davies — National School Breakfast & Lunch Program
9 School Construction Services
10 Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner
11 Tuition Savings Program Fund
12 Higher Education and Industry Center
13 IGT STEM Scholarships
14 Department of Labor and Training
15 Job Development Fund
16 Contractor Training Restricted Receipt Account
17 Workers' Compensation Administrative Account
18 Rhode Island Council on the Arts
19 Governors' Portrait Donation Fund
20 Statewide records management system account

21 SECTION 4. Section 39-21.1-14 of the General Laws in Chapter 39-21.1 entitled "911
22 Emergency Telephone Number Act" is hereby amended to read as follows:

23 **39-21.1-14. E-911 surcharge and first response surcharge.**

24 (a)(1) A monthly E-911 surcharge of fifty cents (\$.50) is hereby levied upon each residence
25 and business telephone line or trunk, or path and data, telephony, internet, voice over internet
26 protocol (VoIP) wireline, line, trunk, or path in the state including PBX trunks and centrex
27 equivalent trunks and each line or trunk serving, and upon each user interface number or extension
28 number or similarly identifiable line, trunk, or path to or from a digital network (such as, but not
29 exclusive of, integrated services digital network (ISDN), Flexpath, or comparable digital private
30 branch exchange, or connecting to or from a customer-based or dedicated telephone switch site
31 (such as, but not exclusive of, a private branch exchange (PBX)), or connecting to or from a
32 customer-based or dedicated central office (such as, but not exclusive of, a centrex system but
33 exclusive of trunks and lines provided to wireless communication companies) that can access to,
34 connect with, or interface with the Rhode Island E-911 uniform emergency telephone system (RI

1 E-911). In each instance where a surcharge is levied pursuant to this subsection (a)(1) there shall
2 also be a monthly first response surcharge of fifty cents (\$.50) and a monthly 988 surcharge of fifty
3 cents (\$.50) and a monthly 988 fee of _____ cents (\$.). The surcharges shall be billed by each
4 telecommunication services provider at the inception of services and shall be payable to the
5 telecommunication services provider by the subscriber of the services.

6 (2) A monthly E-911 surcharge of fifty cents (\$.50) and a monthly 988 fee of _____ cents
7 (\$.) ~~are~~ ~~is~~ hereby levied on each wireless instrument, device, or means, including prepaid,
8 cellular, telephony, internet, voice over internet protocol (VoIP), satellite, computer, radio,
9 communication, data or data only wireless lines, or any other wireless instrument, device, or means
10 that has access to, connects with, or activates or interfaces or any combination thereof with the E-
11 911 uniform emergency telephone system. In each instance where a surcharge is levied pursuant to
12 this subsection (a)(2) there shall also be a monthly first response surcharge of seventy-five cents
13 (\$.75). The surcharges shall be billed by each telecommunication services provider and shall be
14 payable to the telecommunication services provider by the subscriber. Prepaid wireless
15 telecommunications services shall not be included in this act, but shall be governed by chapter 21.2
16 of this title. The E-911 uniform emergency telephone system shall establish, by rule or regulation,
17 an appropriate funding mechanism to recover from the general body of ratepayers this surcharge.

18 (b) The amount of the surcharges shall not be subject to the tax imposed under chapter 18
19 of title 44 nor be included within the telephone common carrier's gross earnings for the purpose of
20 computing the tax under chapter 13 of title 44.

21 (c) Each telephone common carrier and each telecommunication services provider shall
22 establish a special account to which it shall deposit on a monthly basis the amounts collected as
23 surcharges under this section.

24 (d) The money collected by each telecommunication services provider shall be transferred
25 within sixty (60) days after its inception of wireline, wireless, prepaid, cellular, telephony, voice
26 over internet protocol (VoIP), satellite, computer, internet, or communications services in this state
27 and every month thereafter, to the division of taxation, together with the accrued interest. The E-
28 911 surcharge shall be deposited in a restricted-receipt account and used solely for the operation of
29 the E-911 uniform emergency telephone system. The first response surcharge shall be deposited in
30 the general fund; provided, however, that ten percent (10%) of the money collected from the first
31 response surcharge shall be deposited in the information technology restricted receipt account
32 (ITRR account) established pursuant to § 42-11-2.5(a). The 988 surcharge shall be deposited in the
33 988 call center fund established pursuant to § 39-21.3-3. Any money not transferred in accordance
34 with this subsection shall be assessed interest at the rate set forth in § 44-1-7 from the date the

1 money should have been transferred.

2 (e) Every billed subscriber-user shall be liable for any surcharge imposed under this section
3 until it has been paid to the telephone common carrier or telecommunication services provider. Any
4 surcharge shall be added to and shall be stated separately in the billing by the telephone common
5 carrier or telecommunication services provider and shall be collected by the telephone common
6 carrier or telecommunication services provider.

7 (f) Each telephone common carrier and telecommunication services provider shall annually
8 provide the E-911 uniform emergency telephone system division, or any other agency that may
9 replace it, with a list of amounts uncollected, together with the names and addresses of its
10 subscriber-users who can be determined by the telephone common carrier or telecommunication
11 services provider to have not paid the E-911 surcharge.

12 (g) Included within, but not limited to, the purposes for which the money collected from
13 the E-911 surcharge may be used, are rent, lease, purchase, improvement, construction,
14 maintenance, repair, and utilities for the equipment and site or sites occupied by the E-911 uniform
15 emergency telephone system; salaries, benefits, and other associated personnel costs; acquisition,
16 upgrade, or modification of PSAP equipment to be capable of receiving E-911 information,
17 including necessary computer hardware, software, and database provisioning, addressing, and non-
18 recurring costs of establishing emergency services; network development, operation, and
19 maintenance; database development, operation, and maintenance; on-premise equipment
20 maintenance and operation; training emergency service personnel regarding use of E-911;
21 educating consumers regarding the operations, limitations, role, and responsible use of E-911;
22 reimbursement to telephone common carriers or telecommunication services providers of rates or
23 recurring costs associated with any services, operation, administration, or maintenance of E-911
24 services as approved by the division; reimbursement to telecommunication services providers or
25 telephone common carriers of other costs associated with providing E-911 services, including the
26 cost of the design, development, and implementation of equipment or software necessary to provide
27 E-911 service information to PSAPs, as approved by the division.

28 (h) [Deleted by P.L. 2000, ch. 55, art. 28, § 1.]

29 (i) Nothing in this section shall be construed to constitute rate regulation of wireless
30 communication services carriers, nor shall this section be construed to prohibit wireless
31 communication services carriers from charging subscribers for any wireless service or feature.

32 (j) [Deleted by P.L. 2006, ch. 246, art. 4, § 1.]

33 SECTION 5. This act shall take effect on July 1, 2027.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS -- 988 CALL CENTER FUNDING
AND OPERATIONS ACT

1 This act would establish a fund and the operations necessary for a 988 hotline for suicide
2 prevention and behavioral health crisis management. This act would also instate a monthly
3 surcharge on telephone lines to fund the 988 call center.

4 This act would take effect on July 1, 2027.

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