

April 28, 2021

The Honorable Rebecca Bauer-Kahan
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB-988 (Bauer-Kahan) Mental health: mobile crisis support teams: 988 crisis hotline
AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Bauer-Kahan,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing over 3,000 pediatrician members strongly supports AB 988 as introduced on February 18, 2021, which would create the 988 Crisis Hotline Center, using the digits “988” in compliance with existing federal law and standards governing the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. The bill would require counties to provide and make crisis services, including mobile crisis teams and crisis receiving and stabilization services, available to 988 callers and would require counties to coordinate with 988 crisis hotline centers on the deployment of, and access to, these services.

People have become accustomed to using 911 if there’s a crisis of any type, but the police and emergency personnel are not always the best choice when it comes to resolving mental health crises. According to a study by the Treatment Advocacy Center, the risk of being killed by law enforcement is 16 times higher for individuals with untreated serious mental illness than for other civilians.

In 2019, ‘988’ became the number for the suicide hotline under Federal law. AB 988 would implement the 988 Suicide Prevention and Behavioral Health Crisis Hotline throughout our state, in accordance with the federal system, and design the system to meet the unique needs of California’s diverse communities.

Mental health disorders and suicide attempts pose major risks for youth. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Committee on Adolescence reports that suicide is the second leading cause of death for adolescents 15 to 19 years old, affecting young people from all races and socioeconomic groups. By establishing a state-wide hotline, youth (and adults) would have access to mental health services quickly. Additionally, the existence of mobile crisis teams means that in-person services could be provided to people experiencing a crisis, thus providing quick and appropriate care as well as making crisis situations safer for both civilians and law enforcement.

AAP-CA strongly supports AB 988. Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and wellbeing of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,



Jacques Corriveau, MD FAAP
Chair, State Government Affairs Committee
American Academy of Pediatrics, California

cc: AAP Leadership