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LA County Co-Sponsor the Miles Hall Lifeline Act

The nation is facing a mental health crisis. Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, instances of mental illness and suicide rates had increased across the country, including in Los Angeles County (County). The pandemic has worsened this crisis even further, causing increased rates of anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicidal ideation.

When someone is experiencing a mental health crisis, including having suicidal thoughts, they need to be able to connect with a trained mental health professional immediately. For too long, dialing 9-1-1 has been the only option for many people in crisis, but neither law enforcement nor paramedics are adequately trained to handle such behavioral health crises. Over the last few years, the County and other entities have implemented a variety of programs to provide alternative crisis response options to the public. For example, individuals in crisis can call the Department of Mental Health Help Line to access the Psychiatric Mobile Response Team for a non-law enforcement response or they can call a multitude of suicide prevention lines to talk to a trained mental

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health professional. While these programs represent significant progress over a law-enforcement-only response, many people are unaware of how to access them and still default to 9-1-1 when in crisis.

In 2020, the federal government enacted the National Suicide Hotline Act, which established 9-8-8 as the national number for suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotlines. Implementing an easy-to-remember singular number to access all mental health and suicide prevention responses is a game changer. Beginning in July 2022, all Los Angeles County residents will be able to connect to the lifesaving care they need 24 hours a day, seven days a week simply by dialing 9-8-8.

This 9-8-8 number will need to be implemented at local levels, so Assembly member Bauer-Kahan has introduced the Miles Hall Lifeline Act to kickstart the planning process in California. The Miles Hall Lifeline Act will establish a formal office and structure within the state government for implementation, administration, and funding of the 9-8-8 crisis call center network and connected crisis services in California, including mobile crisis response and crisis receiving and stabilization facility services that provide alternatives to law enforcement response for individuals in crisis. It also establishes requirements for 9-8-8 crisis call centers to ensure they are able to effectively communicate and collaborate with existing 9-1-1 and emergency services and serve as an "air traffic control" for connected crisis services in their region. Finally, the bill ensures that any medically necessary mental health and substance use disorder care provided via 9-8-8 and connected crisis services to individuals with private insurance will be reimbursed by those individuals' health care plans or insurers.

The Miles Hall Lifeline Act is an important first step in implementing 9-8-8 as the

suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline in California. As the largest county in the state with a wide network of crisis response services and systems, Los Angeles County should co-sponsor the bill so that our feedback is incorporated in its design.

WE, THEREFORE MOVE that the Board of Supervisors authorize the County of Los Angeles to co-sponsor the Miles Hall Lifeline Act (Bauer-Kahan) and direct the County's Sacramento advocates to take all appropriate legislative advocacy actions to support this effort.

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