

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 6308

As Passed House - Amended:

February 29, 2024

Title: An act relating to extending timelines for implementation of the 988 system.

Brief Description: Extending timelines for implementation of the 988 system.

Sponsors: Senators Dhingra, Robinson, Kuderer, Nobles and Trudeau.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations: 2/15/24, 2/22/24 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/29/24, 96-0.

Brief Summary of Bill (As Amended by House)

- Extends timelines related to the development of platforms for an integrated 988 crisis response system.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 30 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Macri, Vice Chair; Corry, Ranking Minority Member; Chambers, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Connors, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Couture, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Berg, Callan, Chopp, Davis, Dye, Fitzgibbon, Harris, Lekanoff, Pollet, Riccelli, Rude, Ryu, Sandlin, Schmick, Senn, Simmons, Slatter, Springer, Stokesbary, Stonier, Tharinger and Wilcox.

Staff: Lily Smith (786-7175).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

In 2020 Congress passed the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020 which designates the number 988 as the universal telephone number within the United States for the purpose of accessing the National Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Crisis Hotline system that is maintained by the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and the Veterans Crisis Line.

In 2021 legislation was enacted which established several changes to the behavioral health crisis system in response to the adoption of 988 as the new phone number for the National Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Crisis Hotline. Among other changes, the legislation:

- established hubs to provide crisis intervention services, case management, referrals, and connection to crisis system participants;
- required the Department of Health (DOH) to fully fund a new technologically advanced crisis call center platform for use in hubs that is interoperable with other crisis and emergency response systems statewide by July 1, 2024;
- required the Health Care Authority (HCA) to develop a behavioral health integrated client referral system that coordinates system information with the crisis call center hubs and behavioral health entities; and
- established the Crisis Response Improvement Strategy Committee (Strategy Committee) and the related steering committee to review and report on several items related to the behavioral health crisis system, with a final report to the Legislature due January 1, 2025.

The DOH and the HCA must coordinate to develop the technology and platforms needed to manage and operate the behavioral health crisis response and suicide prevention system. The agencies must designate a primary technology system that provides access to coordination, tracking, and transition information, deployment of appropriate services, and tribal consultation and dedicated services.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The advanced technology platform developed by the DOH must be implemented as soon as possible, and funded by January 1, 2026, instead of July 1, 2024. The expiration date for the Strategy Committee and the steering committee is extended from June 30, 2025, to December 31, 2026. Beginning in 2025, the facilitation and staffing duties for the committees are shifted from the Behavioral Health Institute at Harborview Medical Center to the HCA.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Teenagers experience tremendous stress, and the suicide rate, which doesn't include those who contemplate suicide, is higher in Washington than the national average. The current 988 calling system goes to auto-responses with hold times and lacks external coordination to external resources, which discourages its use. It takes time and resources to build a sufficient system that is more than a hotline, and this bill will help ensure that the system is improved, more services are available, and people get the care that they need.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Swara Seshadri; Tejana Matilla; and Alexandra Mallios.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.