
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 1540 (Mark González) - 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: LGBTQ+ youth

Version: June 15, 2026

Urgency: Yes

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Policy Vote: E.M. 7 - 1, HEALTH 10 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Janelle Miyashiro

Bill Summary: AB 1540 requires the Office of Emergency Services (OES) to establish a dedicated "Press 3" function within the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (988) to route calls originating in California to an LGBTQ+ crisis line. This requirement applies only if the California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHS) makes an annual determination that the federal government has not activated a similar nationwide 988 function, as specified.

Fiscal Impact:

- OES estimates initial costs of \$1.79 million and \$791,000 ongoing to support 3.0 permanent positions (988 State Suicide and Behavioral Health Crises Services Fund (988 Fund)). This estimate includes a one-time cost of up to \$1 million for telecommunications infrastructure. Total costs will ultimately depend on the number of 988 centers established to meet statewide demand.
- According to CHHS, the agency intends to delegate the bill's implementation to the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). DHCS estimates total costs of \$6.11 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2027-28 and \$4.00 million annually ongoing (988 Fund), which includes:
 - Contracting: \$4 million initially and \$2 million ongoing to integrate the bill's requirements into current 988 processes, and to support specialized routing, training, reporting, and performance standards for statewide consistency across 988 crisis centers.
 - Personnel: \$2.11 million in FY 2027-28 and \$2.00 million ongoing for 12.0 permanent personnel years (PYs). DHCS reports that these additional resources are required for an expanded workload that existing staff cannot absorb. These new responsibilities include managing the application, selection, and funding process for qualified entities; providing contract oversight, technical assistance, and stakeholder engagement; integrating the "Press 3" option into the existing 988 framework while ensuring alignment with 911 and mobile crisis services; and conducting the legal analysis required to ensure compliance with federal regulations.

Staff notes that the 2026-27 Budget Act augments funding and provides 8.0 PYs to DHCS to support 988 California and implementation of the Behavioral Health Crisis Continuum (988 Fund). Specifically, it allocates \$25.9 million in FY 2026-27, \$25.8 million annually from FY 2027-28 through FY 2029-30, and \$4.4 million annually ongoing.

Background: According to the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), 988 is a phone, chat, and text service that provides free and confidential support to people in suicidal crisis or mental health related distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the U.S. The network consists of more than 200 local, independent, and state crisis centers staffed with skilled, trained crisis counselors. 988 offers specialized services for Spanish-language speakers and people who are deaf or hard of hearing, and connects veterans, service members, and their families to the Veterans Crisis Line for tailored support. 988 also uses Language Line Solutions to provide interpretation to callers in more than 240 additional languages.

In September 2022, Governor Newsom signed AB 988 (Bauer-Kahan, Chapter 747, Statutes of 2022) to ensure and expand services for Californians experiencing a behavioral health crisis. When Californians dial 988, they are directed to one of 12 crisis call centers. The call is routed based on the caller's area code. If a local crisis center is unable to take the call, the caller is automatically routed to a national backup crisis center.

Proposed Law:

- Requires CHHS to annually determine whether the federal government has activated an adequate, specialized LGBTQ+ suicide prevention hotline under the 988 system. If the federal government has not activated such a hotline, requires CHHS and OES to implement one.
- Requires OES to do the following:
 - Request that SAMHSA enable a "Press 3" function for calls originating in California, allowing callers to dial 988 and press "3" to be automatically routed to a specialized 988 call center. This request must be made no later than six months after CHHS determines that an adequate, specialized hotline has not been federally activated.
 - Ensure that the specified call, text, and chat technologies are available no later than 12 months following approval by SAMHSA or its contracted 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Administrator.
- Requires CHHS to identify and contract with one or more qualified entities specializing in LGBTQ+ suicide prevention services no later than 12 months following approval from SAMHSA.
 - Requires CHHS to determine eligibility criteria, establish an application process, and administer funds to these entities, prioritizing applicants that primarily serve LGBTQ+ populations.
- Requires a qualified entity to comply with all of the following:
 - Become a "988 center," as defined.
 - Maintain policies that comply with the California Confidentiality of Medical Information Act (CMIA), the federal Health Insurance Portability and

- Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), and all other applicable state laws governing the protection of sensitive personal and medical information.
- Maintain a primary objective of reducing suicide rates or addressing mental health crises.
 - Demonstrate that its mission includes serving the LGBTQ+ population, or that it employs staff or volunteers who have completed extensive training to respond to LGBTQ+ crisis contacts in a culturally competent manner. The entity must also ensure that these trained staff or volunteers are available to respond to such contacts through an established routing system.
 - States legislative intent to continue California's long history of advancing policies that support suicide prevention efforts and further the initiative to address our youth mental health crisis by reinstating the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline's LGBTQ+ Youth Specialized Services program in California.
 - States the measure is an urgency statute necessary to address the urgent LGBTQ+ youth suicide crisis in California.
 - States legislative findings and declarations.

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