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April 6, 2021

Honorable Jim Wood
Chair, Health, Communications and Conveyance Committee
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 6005
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 988 (Bauer-Kahan) as introduced February 18, 2021 -
SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember Wood:

Disability Rights California (DRC), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, **supports AB 988**. This bill is scheduled for hearing before Assembly Health, Communications and Conveyance Committee.

This bill, known as the Miles Hall Lifeline Act, will implement the national 988 mental health emergency response system in California so that all Californians experiencing a mental health crisis can access life-saving care.

In 2020, the federal government established "988" as the new three-digit number for mental health crisis hotlines. Switching to an easy-to-remember 988 as the "911" for suicide prevention and mental health crisis services will ensure Americans in crisis have access to the help they need. 988 will connect callers with around-the-clock intervention, including mobile crisis support teams staffed by mental health professionals and trained peers instead of police officers.

With calls to existing suicide prevention call centers skyrocketing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic AB 988 will ensure the state is prepared to answer the calls of all Californians in need.

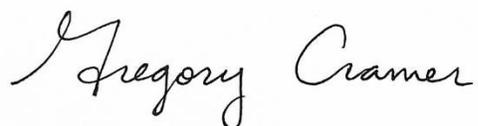
DRC supports efforts to expand access to immediate and long-term mental health supports and services. We also support finding alternatives to police responding to mental health crises when possible, and instead have qualified mental health professionals address certain emergency scenarios.

The current mental health crisis response system relies on law enforcement and puts people suffering from mental illness through an expensive and traumatizing revolving-door as they shuttle between jails, emergency rooms, and the street. A comprehensive crisis response system can prevent these tragedies, save money, and increase access to appropriate care.

AB 988 takes a step forward in addressing these systemic inequities in our mental health system by creating a crisis response system that provides support to help individuals and communities thrive.

For these reasons, DRC supports this bill. Please contact me if you have any questions about our position or if I can provide any further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory Cramer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gregory Cramer
Senior Legislative Advocate
Disability Rights California

cc: Honorable Members, Assembly Health and Communications and
Conveyance
Honorable Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, California State Assembly