

1 HJR168  
2 212415-1  
3 By Representatives Ledbetter, Ellis, Lovvorn, Stringer,  
4 Faulkner, Wood (R), Hall, Estes, Garrett, Rafferty, Nordgren,  
5 Farley, Grimsley, Kitchens, Reynolds, Whitt, Moore (P),  
6 Daniels, Gray and Easterbrook  
7 RFD: Rules  
8 First Read: 01-APR-21

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8           CREATING THE STUDY COMMISSION ON THE 9-8-8  
9           COMPREHENSIVE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CRISIS COMMUNICATION SYSTEM.

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11           WHEREAS, in August 2018, the United States Congress  
12           passed the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018,  
13           requiring the Federal Communications Commission to study the  
14           feasibility of designating a simple, easy-to-remember  
15           three-digit dialing code for a newly re-designated National  
16           Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Crisis Hotline System,  
17           the call number for which is currently 1-800-273-8255 (TALK);  
18           and

19           WHEREAS, in August 2019, the final Federal  
20           Communications Commission report to Congress proposed that  
21           "9-8-8" be the designated number, and proposed regulations  
22           published in January 2020 made that recommendation formally;  
23           and

24           WHEREAS, in October 2020, the President signed the  
25           National Suicide Hotline Designation Act (Public Law No:  
26           116-172), making the 9-8-8 line the universal telephone number

1 for the national suicide prevention and mental health crisis  
2 hotline system; and

3 WHEREAS, implementation of the three-digit call  
4 number will make crisis services instantly accessible and  
5 thereby more effective in responding to mental health crises,  
6 suicidal ideations, and drug overdoses; and

7 WHEREAS, the 9-8-8 line will be nationally  
8 implemented on July 16, 2022, as required by the National  
9 Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020; and

10 WHEREAS, Alabama, in complying with the National  
11 Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020 and the Federal  
12 Communications Commission's rules adopted July 16, 2020, will  
13 ensure that all Alabamians receive consistent and effective  
14 behavioral health crisis services no matter where they live,  
15 work, or travel in the state; and

16 WHEREAS, Alabama seeks to develop and maintain  
17 access to a statewide crisis system of care that is  
18 interconnected, effective, and just; now therefore,

19 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, BOTH  
20 HOUSES THEREOF CONCURRING, That the Study Commission on the  
21 9-8-8 Comprehensive Behavioral Health Crisis Communication  
22 System is established.

23 (a) The purpose of the Study Commission on the 9-8-8  
24 Comprehensive Behavioral Health Crisis Communication System is  
25 to study and provide recommendations for the implementation of  
26 the 9-8-8 system to enhance and expand behavioral health  
27 crisis response and suicide prevention services before it is

1 nationally implemented on July 16, 2022 as required in Public  
2 Law No: 116-172. The commission shall consider all of the  
3 following:

4 (1) How twenty-four seven statewide coverage for  
5 9-8-8 calls, chats, and texts could be achieved in each  
6 county.

7 (2) Strategies for identifying and supporting  
8 investment in new technology to triage calls and link  
9 individuals to follow-up care.

10 (3) Funding to boost the financial stability and  
11 sustainability of call centers and evidence-based crisis  
12 services in every county, so that people experiencing  
13 behavioral health crises can receive higher quality support.

14 (4) Increasing of capacity at the call centers  
15 answering 9-8-8 contacts, for long-term improvement of answer  
16 rates for 9-8-8 calls.

17 (5) Requirements for compliance with the National  
18 Suicide Prevention Lifeline Requirements and Best Practices  
19 Guidelines for Operational and Clinical Standards.

20 (6) Ways for call centers to maintain local resource  
21 and referral listings and ensure linkages to local community  
22 crisis services.

23 (7) Ways for centers to provide follow-up services  
24 to 9-8-8 callers, texters, and chatters based on Lifeline best  
25 practices and guidelines.

26 (8) Requirements for compliance with the National  
27 Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020 and the Federal

1       Communications Commission's rules adopted July 16, 2020 to  
2       assure that all Alabama residents receive an effective level  
3       of 9-8-8 and crisis behavioral health services no matter where  
4       they live, work or travel in the state.

5               (b) The Study Commission on Alabama's 9-8-8  
6       Comprehensive Behavioral Health Crisis Communication System  
7       shall be comprised of the following members:

8               (1) The Commissioner of the Alabama Department of  
9       Mental Health or his or her designee, who shall serve as chair  
10       of the commission.

11              (2) The State Health Officer of the Alabama  
12       Department of Public Health or his or her designee, who shall  
13       serve as co-chair of the commission.

14              (3) Two members of the House of Representatives,  
15       appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

16              (4) Two members of the Senate, appointed by the  
17       President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

18              (5) The Commissioner of the Alabama Department of  
19       Veterans Affairs, or his or her designee.

20              (6) The Director of the Alabama Department of  
21       Emergency Management, or his or her designee.

22              (7) The Secretary of the Alabama Law Enforcement  
23       Agency, or his or her designee.

24              (8) The Governor of Alabama, or his or her designee.

25              (9) A representative of The Crisis Center.

26              (10) A representative from Crisis Services of North  
27       Alabama.

1 (11) A representative of Family Counseling Center of  
2 Mobile.

3 (12) Two representatives from the Alabama Council  
4 for Behavioral Healthcare.

5 (13) One representative from the Behavioral  
6 Healthcare Alliance of Alabama.

7 (14) One representative of the American Foundation  
8 for Suicide Prevention, Alabama Chapter.

9 (15) One representative from the Alabama Department  
10 of Human Resources.

11 (c) All appointing authorities shall coordinate  
12 their appointments so that diversity of gender, race, and  
13 geographical areas is reflective of the makeup of this state.

14 (d) The study commission shall meet as needed at the  
15 call of the chair.

16 (e) Each member shall serve at the pleasure of his  
17 or her appointing authority. A vacancy in the membership shall  
18 be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

19 (f) Members of the commission shall serve without  
20 compensation, but may be reimbursed for expenses as follows:

21 (1) The legislative members of the study commission  
22 shall be entitled to their legislative compensation, per diem,  
23 and travel expenses for each day they attend a meeting of the  
24 study commission, in accordance with Amendment 871 of the  
25 Constitution of Alabama of 1901.

26 (2) Other members of the commission may be  
27 reimbursed for necessary expenses in attending meetings of the

1 commission according to policies and procedures of their  
2 respective appointing authority.

3 (g) A majority of the members of the study  
4 commission shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of  
5 all business at a regular or special meeting.

6 (h) The study commission shall hold its initial  
7 meeting no later than June 1, 2021. Each appointment made  
8 shall be indicated to the Commissioner of the Alabama  
9 Department of Mental Health (ADMH) no later than May 15, 2021.

10 (i) The commission chair or co-chair may ask the  
11 ADMH commissioner for research or writing assistance from ADMH  
12 staff.

13 (j) The study commission shall review the findings  
14 of the 9-8-8 comprehensive behavioral health crisis  
15 communication system landscape analysis submitted by ADMH. The  
16 study commission shall submit a report of its findings and  
17 recommendations to the Senate President Pro Tempore and the  
18 Speaker of the House of Representatives on or before January  
19 11, 2022, the first day of the 2022 Regular Legislative  
20 Session, at which time it shall be dissolved.