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May 31, 2019

VIA ECFS

Marlene H. Dortch  
Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th St. SW

Re: Ex parte Presentation of The Trevor Project - Implementation of the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018, WC Docket No. 18-336

Dear Secretary Dortch:

On Thursday, May 9, The Trevor Project (“Trevor”) met with Wireline Competition Bureau career staff. Participants included myself, Sam Dorison (participating via teleconference), Chief of Staff, The Trevor Project, along with Dee Martin and John Lee at Bracewell LLP. We met separately with Randy Clarke, Acting Legal Advisor for Wireline and Public Safety to Commissioner Starks, and with Chairman Pai and his Wireline Advisor, Nirali Patel on Friday, May 10. Lastly, The Trevor Project team met with Commissioner Rosenworcel and her staff, Jamie Susskind from Commissioner Carr’s Office, and Erin McGrath from Commissioner O’Reilly’s office all on May 22nd.

At the meetings, the following topics were discussed:

- The Center for Disease Control reported that suicide rates rose by 24 percent between 1999 and 2016. In 2016 alone 45,000 suicides were reported in the United States, which amounts to twice the number of homicides. We also are aware that LGBTQ youth are more than four times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers, and that one in five lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth and more than one in three transgender youth report attempting suicide this past year.
- In total, it is estimated that over 1.5 million LGBTQ youth will experience suicidal ideations every year. With approximately 440 trained counselors, The Trevor Project is able to reach thousands of these youth with our services every week.
- The Trevor Project recently established partnerships with AT&T and Google. AT&T committed to a \$1 million donation and multi-year initiative with Trevor to expand our existing text and chat resources to 24/7 availability. Just last week, it was announced that Trevor was one of 20 organizations selected by Google that will share \$25 million in grants to incorporate Artificial Intelligence in an effort to better assess suicide risk level of youth in crisis more quickly.
- The Trevor Project reiterated its original comments to the docket (WC Docket No. 18-336) that the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) recommend specialized services for LGBTQ youth in its statutorily required report to Congress pursuant to the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act (Public Law No. 335). Citing section 3(a)(2)(B)(ii)(II) of the Act, The Trevor Project requested the FCC recommend the following to Congress as they relate to efficacy and operations of the Lifeline:

- Training of National Suicide Prevention Lifeline counselors in LGBTQ cultural competency. Currently, there is no standard quality of care for LGBTQ youth when they dial the Lifeline, and specialty counseling for at-risk communications is needed to improve counseling effectiveness. In fact, a multi-year evaluation conducted by third party researchers found that over 90% of youth in crisis who reach out to Trevor are successfully de-escalated (meaning they are moved out of a state of crisis) and that de-escalation is sustained for two weeks. It is through these proven training methods that the Lifeline will be able to provide the highest quality of services to its clients.
- The establishment of an Integrated Voice Response (“IVR”) to route calls to The Trevor Project, providing one avenue to assist the FCC in answering the technical question of how the Lifeline should handle increased capacity, and addressing one of the highest risk populations in the country. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (“SAMHSA’s”) report to FCC indicated they anticipate a large increase in call volume, and The Trevor Project already operates at a sophisticated national scale and has the ability to serve further youth in crisis. With centralized call centers located in New York and Los Angeles, we are able to maintain the highest possible level of services – led by a Clinician and a Director of Research. We believe this has contributed immensely to the over 90% rate mentioned above.
- Congress recognizes the need for specialized services for LGBTQ youth. The House of Representatives Fiscal Year 2020 Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations Report includes language supporting the need for specific resources for LGBTQ youth. Further, in anticipating the possible designation of a three-digit dialing code, the Appropriations Committee increased up the Lifeline’s budget by \$8 million to build capacity and address efficacy challenges bringing the total budget to \$20 million.
- The possibility of designating 211 as the new three-digit code for the Lifeline was discussed. The Trevor Project shared concerns with a 211 designation as it would require the re-training of 211 operators to effectively handle calls from LGBTQ youth in crisis, without eliminating the need to train current Lifeline localized counselors. Furthermore, FCC’s designation of an independent N11 or three digit code for mental health crises would help ensure that suicide is prioritized as a national issue that must be addressed, public awareness is increased, and sufficient resources are made available to address this national crisis.

The Trevor Project team looks forward to continuing this dialogue as FCC works on its final report to Congress. The lives of LGBTQ youth depend on services offered by the Lifeline utilizing the highest standard quality of care. We thank you for your consideration.



Sam Brinton  
Head of Advocacy and Government Affairs  
The Trevor Project