June 7, 2018

Federal Communications Commission

445 12th Street, SW

Washington, DC 20554

Re: Docket 18-336

Implementation of the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018

Dear Commissioners:

I write on behalf of Lines for Life, and as a member of the community, to urge you to designate a 3-digit code as a Behavioral Health and Suicide Crisis Lifeline – and to reject the North American Numbering Council (NANC) recommendation that no such line should be established.

The NANC fails to acknowledge the challenges individuals in mental health and suicide crisis are facing, such that they are considering a more convenient option rather than a more effective option. 911 services are accessible when we are in physical crisis—why should there not be an option for a mental health crisis?

Though I have not taken the time to put together the statistics on suicide in the United States as I’m sure many have, as an individual who has worked in social services in a wide range of areas across the US, I can say from personal experience that mental health crisis is imminent within all populations—it does not discriminate. To assume that someone who is unable to think clearly in the present, is able to navigate a phone system is an understatement.

I’d like you to imagine being in a car accident, with your loved one severely injured in the passenger seat—you’re frantic—you have absolutely no idea of whether or not they’re going to live or die. What do you do? You call 911 and regardless of whether or not you can express what is happening someone is there for you, fighting to find you, to provide you and your loved one with aid.

Now imagine this service does not exist. Instead you have to contact 211 and speak to an operator who is not trained for your emotions and does not have the resources to provide you with immediate assistance. You now have to be able to say exactly what you need, where you are, and provide all the necessary information for them to connect you with the appropriate service. Then they have to manually connect you with that service, such that you now have to re-explain your needs with to a second individual, maybe you’re transferred again—maybe you have to explain it to a third individual before someone can send help. At this point significant time has passed, and your loved one is significantly less likely to survive—if only there had been an easy number to call.

Sincerely,

*Sarah Fletcher*

Sarah Fletcher

Crisis Intervention Specialist