June 7, 2019

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary

Office of the Secretary

Federal Communications Commission

445 12th Street SW

Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 18-336 and CC Docket No. 92-105 regarding the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018

Dear Madam Secretary,

First Call for Help of Broward, Inc. (dba 2-1-1 Broward) fully supports the recommendation of the North American Numbering Council (NANC) to expand the 211 dialing code to formally include mental health and suicide prevention along with its current general health and human service information and referral purpose.

2-1-1 Broward is a blended 211/crisis center, providing 24-hour multilingual information, referral, listening support, and crisis services. Broward County, Florida, is part of a metropolitan statistical area of over 6 million residents, the 7th largest in the U.S. The 211 number is well known as this community’s health, human service, crisis, and suicide prevention hotline number and is promoted as the safe place to call for any issue or concern. The 211s in this region and throughout much of Florida also answer calls to the national suicide prevention hotline through partnerships with National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. 2-1-1 Broward is accredited by the Alliance for Information & Referral Systems (AIRS) and the American Association of Suicidology (AAS). Calls are answered by degreed professionals who are skilled at managing crisis calls, including active suicide calls. We have a written Memorandum of Agreement with 911 and coordinate closely with mobile crisis and nearly 1,000 other service providers to ensure an immediate and appropriate response for each caller.

Nearly 20 years after the launch of 211, similar blended 211/crisis centers and collaborations exist in communities throughout the nation. In many, 211 is already recognized as the number for health, human services, crisis, and suicide-related help; in effect, for all services. I am aware of concerns expressed that inaccurately state that 211 does not or cannot answer crisis calls. 211 specialists are trained to assess, triage, and properly handle crisis calls of all kinds: domestic violence, elder abuse, child protection, mass casualty events, threats of homicide, human trafficking, veterans experiencing PTSD, serious mental health crises, homelessness, substance abuse, and suicide and active suicide calls.

As a 211 organization that has delivered crisis services since 1995, we strongly encourage the adoption of the recommendation to expand 211 to formally include mental health and suicide prevention. Doing so will ensure that individuals in crisis do not have to determine which of several options they should use and will facilitate seamless access to NSPL and related services.

Respectfully,



Sheila J. Smith

President/CEO