I strongly support adopting 661 or 988 as the 3-digit number specifically for individuals at risk of suicide. It should be linked to the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (Lifeline) network and provide the necessary financial support for its implementation and increased call volume.

The Lifeline will be able to link callers at risk of suicide (and concerned loved ones) directly to counselors trained specifically in suicide prevention without going through an intermediary.

Additionally, research has shown that the protocols Lifeline counselors must follow are effective in reducing distress and suicidality. 211 operators have not been properly trained to counsel on suicidal ideation and can put callers at greater risk of suicide.

Bundling callers at risk of suicide into the 211 line will decrease the time it takes for callers to receive the help they need, expose them to untrained operators during a time of crisis, and potentially increase their chances of dying by suicide.