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June 7, 2019

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St., SW
Washington, DC 20554

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

Dear Commissioners,

As a board member of 211 Palm Beach Treasure Coast Inc. (211 PBTC), I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the report recently issued by the North American Numbering Council (NANC) as part of the process regarding Docket 18-336 that follows the requirements of the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018. We were pleased that the NANC conducted a thorough analysis of the feasibility of implementation of an N11 number for suicide prevention efforts, and we endorse their recommendations. Death by suicide is a national tragedy and is increasing in worrying degrees. Clearly, additional suicide prevention efforts are needed. We agree that an easy to remember 3-digit number is a good strategy for suicide prevention, and the simplest, most logical number to utilize for that purpose, nationwide, is the 2-1-1 number. Therefore, we encourage the FCC to accept the report's detailed research and adopt its conclusions.

As noted in our public comments at the inception of the feasibility study, 211 is fighting for the health, education, and financial stability of our community members in Palm Beach County and along the Treasure Coast. 211's life-saving mission provides crisis intervention, including emergency counseling and suicide prevention, substance abuse assistance, and shelter resources for victims fleeing violent domestic situations.

Our organization has a 48-year history of responding to the needs of the underserved, and today we partner with County Commissions, Children's Services Councils, and United Ways in all five counties we serve to drive systemic changes to solve our community's toughest problems. Our 211, like many across the nation, provide blended services, responding to requests for information and referral *as well as offering crisis counseling and suicide prevention.*

211 HELPLINE | P.O. BOX 3588 | LANTANA, FL 33465 | TEL 561.547.8637 | FAX 561.547.8639

We encourage the FCC to consider our 211 work here in Palm Beach and on the Treasure Coast as a vital partner in increasing access to suicide prevention and intervention services. Since the FCC designation of 211 in 2000, Community Partners from Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River, and Okeechobee Counties have invested millions of dollars to ensure the success of 211 Palm Beach/Treasure Coast, as we respond to close to 100,000 requests for help each year- *thousands of which are from individuals struggling with suicidal thoughts.*

A three-digit access for suicide prevention is absolutely needed. N11 dialing has proven its effectiveness. Additionally, using 211 for both suicide prevention and community information/referral is technically feasible as confirmed by the NANC report. Out of the available numbers, 211 is the most compatible existing use. *Further, approximately 25% of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline crisis centers are also already 211s.*

An all-encompassing "Call 211 if you need help" is the simplest of public messaging. *It should also be recognized that there are around 15 blended NSPL/211 programs that promote 211 as the local number to call for suicide prevention, and have done so for several years without incident or confusion.* Another three-digit code may erode the simplicity of a single-point of access for community help. Despite concerted efforts to educate and market the distinctions, a person in crisis will likely always reach for the most familiar or most accessible number. We recommend that resources should be invested to improve a unified single point of access with a blended partnership of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and nationwide 211 services. In instances where a 211 center is not equipped to handle suicide related calls, technological solutions are available to seamlessly route those callers to the nearest crisis line. We believe in the power of partnership to address gaps, not duplicate services, and will be a valuable partner in the fight against suicide.

In conclusion, 211 Palm Beach/Treasure Coast endorses the core recommendations of the North American Numbering Council which found the 2-1-1 number to be the most effective option available for creating a nationwide 3-digit suicide prevention number. We encourage the FCC to accept the report's detailed research and adopt its conclusions.

You can learn more about our work at www.211palmbeach.org and www.211treasurecoast.org and can reach my office for additional questions or discussion at (561) 533-1065. Thank you for your time in addressing this important issue and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Deese

Board Chair
211 Palm Beach/Treasure Coast