

December 6, 2018

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,

The Louisiana Association of United Ways (LAUW) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the current effort undertaken by the Federal Communications Commission to study the feasibility of designating a three-digit number to the National Suicide Hotline and to assess the effectiveness of the current National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. In Louisiana, United Ways throughout our state are fighting for the health, education and financial stability by investing in 211. In our state our 2-1-1 system is called Louisiana 2-1-1. LAUW plays a state coordination role for our 2-1-1 network.

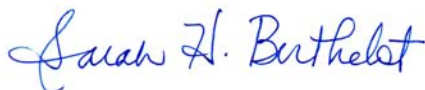
We acknowledge efforts are needed to create a safe place for all people to call – especially underserved or marginalized populations and individuals facing complex problems such as substance/opioid use, human trafficking, and domestic violence.

We encourage the FCC to consider our 211 work here in Louisiana as a vital partner in increasing access to suicide prevention and intervention services. Since the FCC designation of 211 in 2000, we have invested millions of dollars collectively to the success of 211 and answer 200,000 requests for help each year, including during the 12+ large-scale disasters since our inception. These critical investments position us to be key partners in the success of an improved mental health and crisis response system.

Another three-digit code may erode the simplicity of a single point of access for community help. Despite concerted efforts by numerous social services, and multiple hotlines, in our community to educate and market the distinctions, a person in crisis will likely always reach for the most familiar or most accessible number. Our 211 receives calls that are better suited for 911, and our 911 partners often receive calls that we can best answer. 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 United Way's 211 services. We believe in the power of partnership to address gaps, not duplicate services, and will be a valuable partner in the fight against suicide.

You can learn more about our work at www.launitedway.org and can reach my office for additional questions or discussion at 225-341-2928. Thank you for your time in addressing this important issue and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sarah H. Berthelot".

Sarah Berthelot,
President and CEO