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December 7, 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 United Way of Central Illinois, serving multiple counties in Illinois and currently offering 211 services 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 Central Illinois, our United Way's 2-1-1 services has trained operators answering 211 calls currently able to address suicide and other mental health related issues. The added value of 211 is that in almost all cases, a call for one issue leads to multiple issues individuals and families face everyday.

We encourage the FCC to consider our 211 work here in Central Illinois as a vital partner in increasing access to suicide prevention and intervention services. Since the FCC designation of 211 in 2000, local United Ways across the country have invested thousands of dollars and helped thousands of individuals. Moreover, each year our United Way invests more than \$1,500,000 in mental health, substance use, health, education, and other financial stability services. 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 their 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 United Way's 211 services. We believe in the power of partnership to address gaps and want to be a valuable partner in the fight against suicide.

Thank you for your time in addressing this important issue and your consideration. Should you have questions you can reach me directly at 217-726-7000.

Sincerely,


John P. Kelker
President