



**December 3, 2018**

**Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary  
Office of the Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> 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,**

**United Way Bay Area (UWBA) 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 the San Francisco Bay Area, our United Way is fighting for the health, education and financial stability of every community by investing in 211 and other programs, such as our SparkPoint Centers, one-stop financial coaching centers, that help low-income adults manage their credit, increase their income and build assets, to empower them to reach stability and success.**

**We acknowledge efforts are needed to create a safe place for all people to call – especially underserved or marginalized populations such as seniors, people with physical or intellectual disabilities, people that identify as LGBTQ+, Veterans, American Natives, non-English speakers, and individuals facing complex problems such as substance use, human trafficking, and domestic violence. For nearly 100 years, UWBA has supported marginalized populations and today we partner with over 500 private, nonprofit and government stakeholders to drive systemic changes to solve our community's toughest problems like mental health and crisis.**

**We encourage the FCC to consider our 211 work here in the San Francisco Bay Area as a vital partner in increasing access to suicide prevention and intervention services. We have invested over \$20,000,000 over the last decade in the success of 211 and answered over 100,000 call requests for help last year. In 2018 alone, we have answered over 5,000 calls seeking help for mental health, substance use and crisis. Moreover, each year our United Way invests more than \$8,000,000 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 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 <https://uwba.org/> and can reach my office for additional questions or discussion at (415) 808-4346. Thank you for your time in addressing this important issue and for your consideration.**

**Sincerely,**

**Anne Wilson  
Chief Executive Officer**