



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,

United Way Fresno and Madera Counties 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 Fresno and Madera Counties, our United Way fights for the health, education and financial stability of our residents by investing in 211 and by providing free tax preparation services (VITA) to ensure as many families as possible receive tax credits they are entitled to and by engaging in projects and programs that contribute to our mission of having all working families in our Counties thriving.

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/opioid use, human trafficking, and domestic violence. Our organization has a ninety-five year history of reaching out to the underserved and today we partner with more than 75 businesses, nonprofit agencies 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 Fresno and Madera as a vital partner in increasing access to suicide prevention and intervention services. Since the FCC designation of 211 in 2000, we have invested \$3.6 million to the success of 211 and we answer 40,000 requests for help each year. Moreover, our United Way annually invests more than \$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.

We have concern that 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. Right now our 211 receives calls that are better suited for 911, and our 911 partners often receive calls that we can best answer. Instead, we recommend that resources 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 rather than duplicating services and we believe we will be a valuable partner in the fight against suicide.

You can learn more about our work at www.uwfm.org. Please don't hesitate to reach my office for additional questions or discussion at 559-243-3679. Thank you for your time in addressing this important issue and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lindsay S. Callahan".

Lindsay S. Callahan
President and CEO
United Way Fresno and Madera Counties