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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 of Erie County 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 Erie County, our United Way is fighting for health, education and financial stability by investing in and partnering with community partners to support 211 – a confidential information and referral helpline.

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 104 year history of reaching out to the underserved and today we partner with hundreds of businesses, nonprofit agencies, and others to drive systemic changes to solve our community's toughest problems like mental health and crisis situations.

We encourage the FCC to consider our effective 211 work here in Erie County as a vital partner in increasing access to suicide prevention and intervention services. Since the FCC designation of 211 in 2000, United Ways across the country have invested in the success of 211 and find the service a valuable asset to addressing our communities needs for health and human services.

Another three-digit code will 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 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 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. Our 211 staff currently receives calls from people who are experiencing thoughts of suicide and are able to handle these calls.

We respectfully note that our 211 staff work with vulnerable and homeless veterans on a daily basis to ensure that they are housed in an expedient manner and to make sure they are connected to services that can help them overcome whatever challenges they are facing.

You can learn more about our work at [www.unitedwayerie.org](http://www.unitedwayerie.org) and can reach my office for additional questions or discussion at 814-456-2937. Thank you for your time in addressing this important issue and for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Bill Jackson  
President