

December 10, 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 Allen 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 Fort Wayne, Indiana, our United Way is cultivating and advancing the most critical issues facing our community. We do this by operating a 211 Resource Center for northern Indiana and focusing on families that are working hard but struggling to survive.

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 more than 95-year history of reaching out to the underserved and today we partner with hundreds of businesses, nonprofit agencies, educational institutions, and gov't 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 Fort Wayne, Indiana as a vital partner in increasing access to suicide prevention and intervention services. In 2003, the first 211 call was taken in Indiana by our 211 Resource Center. Since that time, we have invested almost \$10,000,000 to the success of 211. **In 2017, the Fort Wayne Resource Center answered nearly 40,000 requests for help. Of the calls we received, 3,140 were for mental health and addiction services.**

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Moreover, each year our United Way invests an additional \$2,700,000 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 <http://www.myunitedway2-1-1.org>. Also, please feel free to reach out to me with for any additional questions or discussion at 260-469-4022 or dnicole@uwacin.org.

Thank you for your time in addressing this important issue and for your consideration.

Sincerely,



David M. Nicole
President & CEO
United Way of Allen County

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