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,

The United Ways of New Hampshire, listed below and partners in 2-1-1NH, appreciate 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 New Hampshire, our United Ways are fighting for the health, education and financial stability by investing in 2-1-1 and actively partnering on a state level response to the opioid crisis, as well as service to veterans and the homeless.

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 organizations have more than a 100 year history of reaching out to the underserved in New Hampshire and today we partner with hundreds of businesses, non-profits and government agencies to drive systemic changes to solve our community's toughest problems like mental health and crisis.

We encourage the FCC to consider our 2-1-1 work here in New Hampshire as a vital partner in increasing access to suicide prevention and intervention services. Since the FCC designation of 2-1-1 in 2000 and the opening of 2-1-1 NH in 2008, we have invested over $3.5 million towards the success of 2-1-1 NH. And, we answer approximately 40,000 calls for help each year. Moreover, each year the United Ways in New Hampshire invest more than $4.75 million 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 2-1-1 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 2-1-1 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 www.211NH.org. Thank you for your time in addressing this important issue and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Patrick Tufts
President and CEO
Granite United Way
Patrick.tufts@graniteuw.org

Liz LaRose
President
Monadnock United Way
liz@muw.org

Mike Apfelberg
President
United Way of Greater Nashua
mapfelberg@unitedwaynashua.org