



**American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention**

December 10, 2018

The Honorable Ajit Pai, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20536

Dear Chairman Pai:

As the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) prepares its report to Congress as required by the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) urges the Commission to address the impact and opportunities that an improved, three-digit national suicide prevention crisis hotline system will have for those living with mental health conditions and for those impacted by suicide.

Today, suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States. It is a national public health crisis that gets worse every year. Recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data confirms that suicide mortality rates have increased over 30% in the last twenty years, with over 47,000 Americans dying by suicide in 2017.

We urge the Commission to support the implementation of an N11 dialing code for a suicide prevention crisis hotline system. We strongly encourage utilization of "611" as the new dialing code. Though some telecom providers use this number for repair and sale services, "611" is the most feasible N11 number available, given current N11 usage. We hope that any inconveniences in the designation of "611" for the purposes of a national suicide prevention hotline number would be outweighed by the benefits of expanding national access to life saving crisis resources. The designation of this simple, easy-to-remember hotline number would significantly increase public knowledge and public access to suicide prevention services. Access to these resources can provide significant decreases in hopelessness, intent to die, and psychological pain.

Any future three digit dialing code for a national suicide prevention crisis hotline number **must** be a N11 number, ideally "611." This new crisis hotline number needs to be as ubiquitous as the 911 emergency response number. Anything less would not put mental health crises and suicidal distress in parity with physical emergencies, and would squander the amazing opportunity to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health and prioritize the prevention of loss of life from suicide.

AFSP also urges the FCC to recommend "increased public education and awareness" and "improved infrastructure and operations" to ensure that a potential N11 national suicide prevention crisis hotline system can properly perform its responsibilities, especially considering the increase in call volume that a N11 number will assume.

AFSP, the nation's largest non-profit dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide, deeply appreciates your commitment to mental health and suicide prevention. The work of the FCC regarding the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act has enormous potential to create a meaningful impact on the United States' suicide crisis.

Sincerely,

Robert Gebbia
Chief Executive Officer

Cc: Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Senator Joseph Donnelly (D-IN), Representative Chris Stewart (R-UT), Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)