



December 7, 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,

Having spent my entire professional life volunteering, staffing, growing and administering a mental health/suicide prevention helpline, I sincerely 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.

During my over 32 year tenure in this field, we have heard time and time again, call after call from those that are despairing and hopeless that these lines are truly lifelines for individuals who often have no other place to turn. Empathetic, compassionate, trained ears are there for them when no one else might be. One of my most prideful moments was when Call2Talk, the Call Center I founded in Massachusetts, was honored to become a National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Center. Being part of this amazing network has afforded us the opportunity to answer even more calls from individuals that need support in order to face and overcome the hurdles in their lives. Call2Talk has since also been afforded the opportunity to grow it's reach even more broadly by being invited to join the Mass211 statewide platform. This has been the epitome of a successful blending of services. Our resources, staffing and infrastructure have merged together seamlessly.

All of us in the 211 system applaud the efforts to improve access to services for people in a mental health crisis and are committed to be an integral part of the solution. As Brian A Gallagher, President and CEO of United Way Worldwide stated, we know that "help by telephone" is proven effective in suicide prevention, and current hotline services mitigate risk, while follow-up calls offered by our network of 211 providers reduce future suicidal behaviors and increase help-seeking.

In addition, the marriage of 211 Information & Referral and Suicide Prevention Services creates a natural flow of service delivery. Individuals who are emotionally despondent and are seeking to discover their reasons to live are often presenting issues concerning food security, housing and/or utility assistance only to find out that we can support these needs quickly and without delay.

Our 211 network benefits our crisis line as it shares it's robust telephone software which supports an ACD system (automatic call distributor), queue call routing, a callback option, availability in responding in over 140 languages and sophisticated call reports providing much needed data and helpful scheduling information.

Our 211 network already has programs, protocols and processes in place for many of the desired crisis line features. These includes:

- Follow up protocols
- Veteran's Services
- Emergency Management
- Coalition Membership
- State Contracts
- Technology systems

As I stated earlier, I have come full circle, beginning as a crisis line volunteer to Directing our Crisis Center to now operating Mass211. Formalizing the partnership between the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, United Way Worldwide, and the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems to create a wholistic, blended system supported by a training and technology infrastructure is a dream come true. This would create the most optimal service for those that need this service most. Less individuals would feel alone and as a result we would be creating communities where people were de-escalated enough and therefore a suicide safer community.

By bringing the 211 network in as a trusted infrastructure we will be able to move in a positive direction in addressing the mental health crisis and address the current needs of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Network of Centers who answer the call for suicide prevention.

Sincerely,



Eileen Davis

Vice President, MASS2-1-1
Director, Call2Talk