



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 Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin our United Ways are fighting for the health, education and financial stability by investing in 211, opioid and other substance use, early child risk assessment and home visiting, anti-human trafficking, child abuse prevention, and many partner agencies that fight for the health, education and financial stability of all Wisconsinites. United Way of Wisconsin is the managing partner of 211 Wisconsin and is proud that residents in all 72 counties have access to 211.

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 31 year history of working with the local United Ways in our state. Wisconsin United Ways fund more than 900 local programs. United Way of Wisconsin partners with 5 state agencies and many aligned statewide organizations to drive systemic changes to solve our community's toughest problems like mental health and crisis. Our Executive Director is a member of the Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health Collective Impact Executive Council.

We encourage the FCC to consider our 211 work here in Wisconsin as a vital partner in increasing access to suicide prevention and intervention services. In 2017 United Ways in our state invested more than 2 million dollars into our 211 system. They have maintained their commitment to 211 since 2004 when our state system was activated. Annually we answer more than 200,000 requests for help each year. Moreover, each year our local United Ways invest more than \$104 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 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 unitedwaywi.org and can reach my office for additional questions or discussion at (608) 246-8272. Thank you for your time in addressing this important issue and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Charlene Mouille
Executive Director