

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 Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha 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 Southeastern Wisconsin, our United Way is fighting for the health, education and financial stability by investing in 211, mental health programming, early childhood education, and public health coalitions that address the reduction of homelessness, teen pregnancy and infant mortality.

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. For more than a century, we have reached out to the underserved and today we partner with more than 220+ health and human service programs, and more than 70,000 individuals, corporations and foundations 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 Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha County as a vital partner in increasing access to suicide prevention and intervention services. Since the FCC designation of 211 in 2000, we have invested more than \$10 million into the success of 211 and answer more than 250,000 calls per year requests for help each year. Moreover, each year our United Way invests more than \$23 million each year 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

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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 www.unitedewaygwmc.org and can reach my office for additional questions or discussion at 414-263-8100. Thank you for your time in addressing this important issue and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mary Lou Young

CEO

United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County