

December 10, 2018

Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Docket 18-336 Implementation of the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing to urge you to designate a 3-digit code as a Behavioral Health and Suicide Crisis Lifeline. I have been involved with suicide prevention efforts in Cleveland, Ohio since starting as a Crisis Intervention Specialist for the Mobile Crisis Team at FrontLine Service in 1995. I am now the Director of our Crisis Services, but over the years I have answered hundreds of calls from people experiencing a mental health crisis and it is very clear to me that the person who answers these calls for help needs to be specifically trained to handle these calls.

Our Country's suicide rate is alarming with over 47,000 people dying by suicide last year. This human suffering has been steadily increasing over the past several decades. This is a public health issue that needs bold action. Despite many valuable efforts, the Crisis Centers across the country as they are currently funded cannot meet the demand for services. At this time we urgently need to expand upon the system that is currently in place for support and self-help to prevent suicide death.

Our Crisis hotline has been affiliated with the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline since 2005. This network of community-based call centers provides invaluable services that connects with millions of callers in crisis every year, with proven effectiveness amidst steadily increasing demand. As recommended by the Congressional special mandate to the Commission, the creation of the Lifeline national behavioral health and suicide N-11 number, makes this service readily accessible, to the benefit of all of America's communities.

I urge you to designate a 3-digit code as a Behavioral Health and Suicide Crisis Lifeline. The time is now to embrace mental and emotional wellness as a national priority – and to deliver 3-digit access to crisis intervention services.

216.623.6555 (Main Phone)  
216.623.6539 (Fax)  
216.623.6888 (Mobile Crisis Hotline)

[www.FrontLineService.org](http://www.FrontLineService.org)

1744 Payne Ave., Cleveland, OH 44114

A contract agency of the Alcohol, Drug Addiction & Mental Health Services Board of Cuyahoga County and a partner agency of United Way Services of Greater Cleveland.

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Three-digit access will:

- Deliver timely, effective and efficient crisis intervention services to millions of Americans
- Facilitate access to the affiliated Veterans Crisis Line, which is the cornerstone of suicide prevention for veterans
- Make it easier to connect people in need with help
- Meet the *dramatically* growing need for crisis intervention
- Help eliminate the stigma of mental health by normalizing help seeking for mental illness with the same priority we deliver for services like fire and rescue, social service referral, and telecommunication referral for people with hearing disabilities
- Enabling us to turn the tide on suicide as we have started to do with heart attacks.

The Commission has received comments suggesting that 211 be used for 3-digit access to crisis intervention, rather than a dedicated behavioral health and suicide lifeline. I strongly disagree with this suggestion and have great concerns as to the burden it would impose on that network. Many 211 center staff are not trained crisis counselors and callers do not need to be "handed off" to someone else. The individuals in crisis deserve to have someone on the other end of the line that is there specifically to help them.

Thank you very much for your involvement in this issue that affects hundreds of millions of lives in our country every year.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Rick Oliver'.

Rick Oliver, LPPC-S  
Director of Crisis Service  
FrontLine Service  
Cleveland, Ohio 44114

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