



July 23, 2009

VIA COURIER

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Re: *Kristin Brooks Hope Center's Suicide Prevention Hotlines*
1-800-SUICIDE, 1-888-SUCIDE, 1-877-SUICIDA

Dear Madam Secretary,

I am writing in response to your letter of May 13, 2009 to the Acting Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission. That letter was submitted in the FCC's two-year-old pending docket relating to the request of HHS' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to have the number 800-SUICIDE (and two others) permanently taken away from the 11-year-old private suicide prevention program of the Kristin Brooks Hope Center and reassigned to the federal government for SAMHSA's use. Under KBHC's stewardship as a private foundation, the hotlines have routed over 3 million calls and saved countless lives since 1998. Obviously, KBHC opposes the forcible transfer of three of its longstanding and most recognizable hotline numbers to the federal government. The FCC currently has an August 14 deadline for making a decision on this matter.

Your May 13 letter expressed concern about the continuation of certain SAMHSA programs, including a new one targeting veterans and soldiers conducted in conjunction with the Veterans Administration, if the numbers are not given to SAMHSA. By this letter, KBHC is proposing a resolution of the dispute that will address all your concerns and interests without the need to forcibly transfer KBHC's key asset to HHS/SAMHSA. I am writing this letter to you directly because, to date, SAMHSA's personnel have refused even to discuss any sort of mutual settlement and your May 13 letter to the FCC suggests a personal interest on your part.

Our proposal is this: The current SAMSHA grant for operation of 800-SUICIDE and the other KBHC numbers runs until September 2012. KBHC proposes that the SAMHSA request for transfer of the numbers be withdrawn and the numbers be returned to KBHC. In return, KBHC will agree *in writing* to continue the current routing of the numbers as determined by SAMHSA, including the VA hotline option, for the duration of the current grant. During this period, KBHC will coordinate with SAMHSA to ensure that the numbers will operate exactly as

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Page 2 of 2
July 23, 2009

they would if they were operated directly by SAMHSA. The numbers will be routed to the same call centers for answering, they will provide the same VA menu option, and any future changes will be incorporated as requested by SAMHSA. The only difference will be that the numbers will be operated by KBHC's telecom carrier (which operates its other 11 hotlines) and KBHC will pay the bills for service. SAMHSA will get everything it gets now without having to pay for it. (Federal agencies do not get many offers like this!) And as part of this arrangement, KBHC will agree that if any future financial issues arise which threaten KBHC's ability to operate the numbers, KBHC will cooperate in a permanent transfer of the numbers to SAMHSA.

This arrangement is acceptable to KBHC because it ends the dispute, returns the numbers to KBHC in the longer term, and enables KBHC to preserve the value in its 800-SUICIDE trademark and its fundraising appeal. The numbers will continue to be used for their proper purpose - suicide prevention - and SAMHSA will have all its programs preserved (including future revisions) and its concerns about finances removed. As part of this cooperative approach, KBHC would ask to participate on SAMHSA's Advisory Board for its 800-273-TALK (and 800-SUICIDE) activities, at least during the period while the two numbers are being operated as one. In addition, KBHC hopes that the discussions leading to the final details of this arrangement can cover other lingering matters between KBHC and SAMHSA, such as final resolution of KBHC's disputed claims. Our short term goal is to end the uncertainty surrounding 800-SUICIDE, while our longer term goal is to end all the differences between KBHC and SAMHSA so that all of both Parties' efforts and actions are focused cooperatively on suicide prevention programs. I hope you agree that this is a true "win-win" approach.

I hope that this settlement proposal is acceptable to you and that you can direct SAMHSA to work with KBHC to resolve this dispute promptly in order to meet the August 14 FCC deadline. The written agreement to memorialize this arrangement can be prepared quickly and the details completed in a matter of days. KBHC stands ready to work with SAMHSA and refocus all our efforts on suicide prevention rather than on arguing over the permanent taking of KBHC's assets. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Brother Pope Simmons
Chairman of the Board
Kristin Brooks Hope Center

Cc: FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski
FCC Commissioner Copps
FCC Commissioner McDowell
Julie Veach, Acting Chief, FCC Wireline Competition Bureau
The Honorable Eric Shinseki, Secretary of Veterans Affairs
Office of Senator Edward Kennedy
Office of Senator Samuel Brownback
Office of Senator Thomas Coburn
Ms. Rina Hakimian, Counsel for SAMHSA