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December 17, 2018

942

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

Dear Commissioners:

I write today to urge the Commission to adopt a brand new and practical 3-digit phone number for those needing mental health and suicide support.

Devastatingly, suicide rates are up in our country, and each year they seem to be getting worse. The Center for Disease Control has reported that over 40,000 Americans died by suicide last year, an increase over previous years. More needs to be done to help those in need, and to increase resources and improve access to mental health professionals to help those thinking of suicide.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, launched in 2004, is a national effort to reach people in crisis, using the number 1-800-273-TALK. This has been a true lifeline, growing from just a few calls that first year to over 2 million last year, including over 700,000 calls to the national Veterans Crisis Line. With its success has come an increase in demand, which we as government officials and policy leaders are obligated to keep up with.

I believe that a 3-digit code number, similar to 9-1-1 for emergencies, would most easily come to mind for those in need of intervention services. A new designated 3-digit code, such as 6-1-1, which has been recommended by my friends from Oregon Lines for Life, would be best because we need a dedicated hotline for only this issue.

Some have suggested using the existing 2-1-1 service, and having those operators then patch callers through to the suicide hotline. However, using 2-1-1 would simply delay someone's ability to receive services, in a situation where every second counts, rather than facilitating immediate access to suicide prevention services as Congress intended.

I write on behalf of those struggling with mental health issues, our veterans struggling with PTSD, and for those impacted by the tragedy of suicide. I urge you to designate a 3-digit code as a Behavioral Health and Suicide Crisis Lifeline. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator

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