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**For Immediate Release**

**CHAIRMAN PAI PROPOSES TO FORMALLY DESIGNATE 988 FOR NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION & MENTAL HEALTH HOTLINE**

*988 Would Redirect to the Existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline*

WASHINGTON, November 19, 2019—Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai today proposed to begin a rulemaking to establish 988 as a new, nationwide, three-digit phone number for a suicide prevention and mental health hotline. The Commission will vote on this proposal at its December 12 public meeting.

“The suicide rate in the United States is at its highest level since World War II, and designating 988 as the suicide prevention and mental health hotline would be a major boost for our nation’s suicide prevention efforts,” said Chairman Pai at an event today with federal agency partners and national leaders in preventing suicide and helping at-risk communities. “When it comes to saving lives, time is of the essence, and we believe that 988 can be activated more quickly than other possible three-digit codes. In addition, 988 has an echo of the 911 number we all know as an emergency number. Awareness of this resource—including how memorable the number is—should make a real difference in saving lives.”

The Chairman’s proposal would designate 988 as the national 3-digit code. It would also require that all phone companies transmit all calls to 988 to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, which today provides suicide prevention assistance at 1-800-273-8255 (TALK) and through [online chats](#). The Lifeline is a national network of 163 crisis centers that is funded by the Department of Health and Human Services’ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Calls to the Lifeline are routed from anywhere in the United States to the closest certified crisis center. In 2018, trained Lifeline counselors answered over 2.2 million calls and over 100,000 online chats.

The National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018 directed the FCC, in consultation with the SAMHSA, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the North American Numbering Council, to study the feasibility of using a simple, easy-to-remember 3-digit number for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system. In August, the FCC’s Wireline Competition Bureau and Office of Economics and Analytics sent this [report](#) to Congress, recommending 988 as the new 3-digit dialing code and finding that such a 3-digit number “would likely make it easier for Americans in crisis to access potentially life-saving resources.”

If the proposed Notice of Proposed Rulemaking is adopted by a vote of the full Commission at its December 12 Open Commission Meeting, the Commission will begin taking public

comment on the proposal. Following review of that public record, the Commission will decide whether and how to proceed with final rules to formally designate 988 as the nationwide phone number for suicide prevention and mental health support.

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*This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).*