

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Implementation of the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018*, WC Docket No. 18-336, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (December 12, 2019)

Every day in this country, thousands and thousands of people call the national suicide and mental health hotline with a plea for help and a cry for support. They are in crisis. We are in crisis, too. That's because suicide is on the rise. It is now the tenth-leading cause of death in the United States. More than 6,000 veterans commit suicide each year. Half a million lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth will attempt suicide this year alone. Last year, more first responders died by suicide than in the line of duty. And according to the Centers for Disease Control, suicide is the second most common cause of death among teenagers and young adults—second only to accidents. On top of this, the rate of suicide committed by teen girls is at a 40-year high.

Those facts are not easy to hear. Because for those of us who have lost family or friends they loved—myself included—they are cruel reminders of birthdays missed, holidays gone, and words of encouragement that were never received.

That is why what we do here is important. In response to the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act, today we start a rulemaking to set aside an easy to remember, three-digit dialing code for a nationwide suicide and mental health crisis hotline. How we implement this matters. So we ask for input on the details to get this done, including just how calls will be routed and how to implement the three-digit code in areas where it is already used at the start of a seven-digit telephone number.

I want to thank my colleagues for making some changes to this rulemaking at my request. In particular, I appreciate their willingness to highlight the growing suicide rates of young women. I also want to thank them for including a question about how texting fits into this discussion. Texting is primary for so many young people. It would be a mistake for us to build a system that presumes talk is the only starting point for discussion. Nonetheless, I worry that in a deregulatory rush last year this agency announced that texting was outside our authority without fully considering the consequences. It would be a shame if that limits what we do and cuts off so many individuals—and especially young people—who reach out first and foremost through text.