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For Immediate Release**FCC PROPOSES DESIGNATING 988 AS NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION & MENTAL HEALTH HOTLINE NUMBER*****Agency Begins Formal Rulemaking, Seeks Comment on Proposal***

WASHINGTON, December 12, 2019—The Federal Communications Commission today started the process of designating 988 as a new, nationwide, 3-digit number for a suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline. This designation will help ease access to crisis services, reduce the stigma surrounding suicide and mental health conditions, and ultimately save lives.

Today’s Notice of Proposed Rulemaking proposes that calls made to 988 would be directed to the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 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). Currently, the Lifeline is available by calling 1-800-273-TALK and through [online chats](#). In 2018, trained Lifeline counselors answered over 2.2 million calls and over 100,000 online chats.

Today’s effort began with Congressional passage of the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018. That statute tasked the FCC, in consultation with SAMHSA and the Department of Veterans Affairs, with examining and reporting on the technical feasibility of designating a shorter number—“a simple, easy-to-remember, 3-digit dialing code”—for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline.

In a [report](#) to Congress released in August, the FCC’s Wireline Competition Bureau and Office of Economics and Analytics recommended 988 as that new 3-digit dialing code. The report found that a 3-digit suicide hotline number “would likely make it easier for Americans in crisis to access potentially life-saving resources.” The report noted that, from 1999 to 2016, suicide increased in 49 of the 50 states, and the increase was greater than 20% in more than half of those states. It also noted that suicide rates are higher across various at-risk populations, including Veterans and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) communities. The report examined the feasibility of using various 3-digit numbers, including a wholly unique 3-digit number like 988 and N11 numbers (i.e., 211 to 911), and found that the technical and operational issues associated with implementing 988 could be addressed and resolved more quickly than any consumer re-education efforts needed to repurpose an existing N11 number.

The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking proposes requiring that all telecommunications carriers and interconnected Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) service providers make, within 18

months, any network changes necessary to ensure that users can dial 988 to reach the Lifeline. The Notice also seeks comment on all aspects of implementation, including whether a longer or shorter timeframe would be needed to make 988 a reality.

The Commission will begin taking public comment on the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking following publication in the Federal Register. Following review of that public record, the Commission will move toward final rules.

Action by the Commission December 12, 2019 by Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 19-128). Chairman Pai, Commissioners O’Rielly, Carr, Rosenworcel, and Starks approving. Chairman Pai, Commissioners Carr, Rosenworcel, and Starks issuing separate statements.

WC Docket No. 18-336

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