



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

December 31, 2019

The Honorable Mark DeSaulnier
U.S. House of Representatives
503 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman DeSaulnier:

Thank you for your letter expressing support for FCC adoption of a new three-digit dialing code for the National Suicide Prevention Hotline. There is a suicide epidemic in this country and, and it is disproportionately affecting at-risk populations, including, as you sadly know all too well, our veterans. I agree that it is more important than ever that anyone in need can easily access life-saving support, and I am grateful for your efforts to increase awareness of resources to prevent suicide.

I believe that an easy-to-remember 3-digit number for emergency suicide prevention and mental health services would result in more people reaching out for assistance and would help to combat this crisis. I'm pleased to report that at our December 12 Open Meeting, we adopted a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (Notice) to move forward with the necessary steps to establish 988 as a national 3-digit number to access suicide prevention and mental health services. Under my proposal, anyone calling 988 would be routed to the established National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK), which is already saving lives.

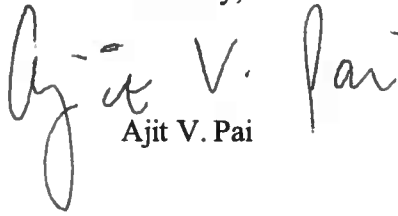
As you note, the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act tasked the FCC, in coordination with the Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services for Mental Health and Substance Abuse and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, with examining and reporting on the technical feasibility of designating a simple, easy-to-remember 3-digit number for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system. Consistent with the recommendations made by FCC staff in August 2019, the Notice starts the process of designating 988 as the 3-digit dialing code for this purpose. This designation will help increase the effectiveness of suicide prevention efforts, ease access to crisis services, reduce the stigma surrounding suicide and mental health conditions, and ultimately save lives.

In particular, the Notice proposes that all telecommunications carriers and interconnected VoIP providers be required to implement 988 in their networks within 18 months. In addition, the Notice seeks public input on several implementation issues, such as ubiquitous nationwide deployment of 988, call routing requirements, dialing 988 in certain geographic areas, the implementation timeframe, and the costs of implementing 988. For your convenience, I have appended to this letter a copy of the draft Notice, which discusses these issues in greater detail. Please be assured that we will take into consideration your views and those of other stakeholders.

Page 2—The Honorable Mark DeSaulnier

I look forward to working together as we move forward on a rulemaking to designate 988 as the three-digit dialing code for national suicide prevention. Working together, we can and we will save lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ajit V. Pai". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "A" and a long tail on the "i".

Ajit V. Pai