



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

September 30, 2020

The Honorable David B. McKinley  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2239 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

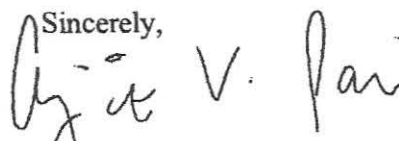
Dear Congressman McKinley:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's implementation of the 988 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. I agree that this is a critical issue, with suicide rates reaching the highest levels seen since World War II. Establishing the easy-to-remember 988 as the "911" for suicide prevention and mental health services will make it easier for Americans in crisis to access the help they need. And when more Americans receive these services, we know that more lives will be saved.

As you know, the Commission adopted at its July Agenda meeting my proposal to require voice service providers to transmit 988 calls to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by July 16, 2022—the earliest technically feasible date for nationwide implementation of 988. The new rules will apply to all telecommunications carriers as well as all interconnected and one-way Voice over Internet Protocol providers. The two-year transition reflects the real challenges of this nationwide effort, including the need for widespread network changes, transitioning numerous area codes throughout the country to 10-digit dialing, educating consumers, and providing time for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to prepare for the expected increase in the volume of calls. Some phone companies urged us to roll out 988 on a phased-in basis. But a uniform implementation date will minimize potentially deadly consumer confusion that could result from having 988 available in some, but not all, areas.

Although some providers may implement 988 before the deadline, I anticipate less consumer confusion with a single widely known "available-no-later-than" date, accompanied by coordinated, national consumer education campaigns by our federal partners. The FCC expects and encourages providers to coordinate with the FCC, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and Department of Veterans Affairs staff before moving forward with early adoption. This coordination will further facilitate clear and informative public education campaigns.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,  
  
Ajit V. Pai