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**For Immediate Release**

**FCC TO CONSIDER TEXT-TO-988 TO EXPAND ACCESS TO THE  
SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE**

*New Rules Would Establish July 2022 Deadline to Implement 988 Texting*

WASHINGTON, October 27, 2021—FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel today proposed an order that would expand access to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by establishing the ability to text 988 to directly reach the Lifeline to better support at-risk communities in crisis, including youth and individuals with disabilities. The Lifeline is a national network that provides free, confidential support to Americans in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. If approved by a vote of the Commission at its November 18 Open Meeting, this proposed Second Report and Order would adopt a uniform implementation deadline requiring covered text providers to support text messaging to 988 by July 16, 2022—the same date the FCC has established 988 as the 3-digit dialing code for Americans to reach the Lifeline by telephone.

Quick and easy access to mental health and crisis counseling services is critical. In 2020, 44,834 individuals died by suicide in the United States, and evidence suggests the toll of the global pandemic has only increased the strain on many Americans' mental health and well-being. Suicide significantly impacts at-risk communities, including youth, the Black community, the LGBTQ+ community, Veterans, and the deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, and people who have speech disabilities that affect communication. For individuals in crisis, text messaging can make it easier to contact a crisis counselor by allowing for a certain level of anonymity rather than engaging in a phone conversation.

“Texting has become an integral part of how we stay in touch, with Americans sending an estimated 2.2 trillion text messages in 2020 alone. During a global pandemic where so many have felt isolated from their friends and family, and students have been separated from their peers, the ability to text to stay connected has proven even more critical,” said **Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel**. “For so many of our nation’s young people and at-risk communities, including LGBTQ+ youth and people with disabilities, texting is their primary mode of communication. And as such, we should meet them where they are—so they can connect to mental health resources no matter how they communicate during a crisis.”

If adopted, this item would require covered text providers to support texting to 988 by routing text messages sent to 988 to the Lifeline’s 10-digit number, 1-800-273-8255 (TALK). It would adopt a uniform implementation deadline requiring covered text providers to support text messaging to 988 by July 16, 2022. The proposed rules would also establish a process that will require covered text providers to support transmitting messages to 988 in additional text messaging formats that the Lifeline is capable of receiving. And the item would find that the FCC’s federal partners are best positioned to determine whether and how to text 988 for the Veterans Crisis Line’s text service.

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During the transition to 988, Americans who need help should continue to contact the Lifeline by calling 1-800-273-8255 (1-800-273-TALK) and through [online chats](#). Service Members, Veterans, and their families may reach the Veterans Crisis Line by calling 1-800-273-8255 and pressing 1, by texting 838255, or by chat through the Veterans Crisis Line's website, <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>. For more information about the 988 implementation, visit <https://www.fcc.gov/suicide-prevention-hotline>.

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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).*