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**For Immediate Release**

**CHAIRWOMAN CALLS ON WIRELESS INDUSTRY AND RELATED ASSOCIATIONS TO EXPLORE 988 ROUTING SOLUTIONS**

*Visits 988 Call Center in Recognition of Suicide Prevention Awareness Month*

WASHINGTON, September 28, 2023—FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel today encouraged wireless carriers and industry associations to take the necessary steps to identify and develop a 988 georouting solution that could be deployed in wireless networks nationwide. The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is a national network of more than 200 crisis centers that helps thousands of people overcome crisis situations every day. These centers are supported by local and state resources as well as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

In recognition of Suicide Prevention Awareness Month this September, Chairwoman Rosenworcel visited one of these 988 call centers, EveryMind, in Maryland this morning. She was joined by Commissioner Anna Gomez. EveryMind has helped individuals throughout the greater DC, Maryland, and Virginia region across a wide swathe of health and human services since 1957 and provides 24/7 text and chat backup as one of the 20 national back-up centers for the 988 Lifeline. During her visit she spoke with those who answer 988 calls to learn more about some of the challenges they and the people who call in to the service face, such as connecting to local providers and resources.

“Every eleven minutes, someone in the United States loses their life to suicide. Last year, getting help got a lot easier when we implemented 988 as the easy-to-remember, 3-digit number for the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. But more can be done to ensure those in need can reach local resources for mental health support” said **Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel**. “We need industry’s help to improve access to this life-saving service that the 988 Lifeline provides while being respectful of the privacy and confidentiality of callers reaching out for support.”

In the letters sent today, the Chairwoman asked these groups to identify and develop a 988 georouting solution that could be deployed within a reasonable time. According to mental health and crisis counseling experts, getting the caller to the geographically appropriate local crisis center—known as georouting—can help get life-saving services to those in need of public health and safety resources. Currently when a caller dials 988, the originating service provider conveys the area code and exchange via the caller’s phone number, and the call is then routed to the call center designated to serve that area code and exchange. Over 80% of all calls made to the 988 Lifeline are from wireless phones, and callers often dial 988 from outside the area code associated with their cell phone number. As a result, many wireless callers to 988 are unable to access local resources that they may need in a time of crisis.

“In its first year, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline answered nearly 5 million calls, texts, and chats, helping millions of people in crisis,” said Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon, Ph.D., HHS Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use and the leader of SAMHSA. “We are continually looking at ways to improve this life-saving service -- to connect more people to the help they need, more quickly, and locally, so that they can receive help where they live, and if needed, ongoing care in their community.”

The 988 Lifeline has successfully tested a method of routing wireless 988 calls to a crisis call center near the physical location of the caller rather than by their phone’s area code. This test, which did not involve real-time calls, explored a routing method that directs the caller to a 988 crisis call center based on cell tower location and wire-center boundaries but does not share the precise location of the caller with the 988 Lifeline. Today’s letters are the next step to build on the foundation of this initial test and further work with service providers/carriers to explore this potential solution for 988 calls.

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