

MARCUS J. MOLINARO
19TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3219

1207 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-5441

HOUSE COMMITTEE
ON AGRICULTURE
HOUSE COMMITTEE
ON SMALL BUSINESS

November 3, 2023

1021

The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel
Chairwoman
Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street NE
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairwoman Rosenworcel:

The past several years have marked incredible developments in addressing our nation's suicide and mental health crisis. As you know, since the first national number was established in 2005 (800-272-8255 TALK) millions of Americans have been able to find the help they need. Over time and through continued use of this lifeline, the federal government and advocates recognized that a three-digit number would be easier to remember and more likely to be used in times of crisis.

In December 2019, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC/Commission) approved a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to designate 9-8-8 as the three-digit number for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline. The FCC prompted telecom providers to ensure every landline, cell phone, and every voice-over internet device across the country was capable of using 9-8-8. On October 17, 2020, the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020 was signed into law, codifying 9-8-8 into statute as the new Lifeline phone number.

Since the hotline's new number launched in July 2022, millions of Americans have dialed 9-8-8 to access mental health and substance crisis services, reducing the stigma surrounding seeking help. Yet, there is still a great deal of work to ensure callers can rely on 988 to connect them to a comprehensive in-person crisis system and the proper resources in their areas.

Most people think that by calling 9-8-8, like 9-1-1, they will be routed to a local call center based on the proximity to where they are located. Unfortunately, 988 routes the caller to a call center based on the area code of their phone number. This can make it difficult for callers to be connected to a local call center that is familiar with and can connect them with community resources.

Your agency has been examining the feasibility of using geo-routing in 9-8-8 calls for some time. Recently, the FCC announced a proof-of-concept trial with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the 988 Lifeline administrator, Vibrant Emotional Health, that included industry partners. As noted in your September 28th press release, we applaud the steps you have taken to identify a solution to this issue. However, Congress has not yet received information on how successful the routing of the trial calls were at a non-proprietary level by the industry provider—information that is essential for the public as we move forward on this issue.

We want you to ensure that the wireless carriers take the necessary steps to develop a geo-routing solution in line with the successful trial. The interim geo-routing solution will save lives and improve the

experience for those in crisis. If the wireless carriers do not act expeditiously, the FCC must act under its regulatory authority to mandate compliance. As the Commission has stated in its letter to the industry, "This is a surmountable technical challenge, and we hope you will . . . work toward geo-routing implementation..."¹

Additionally, we ask the FCC to work with Congress and relevant stakeholders and brief us on the agency's plan for geo-routing and geolocation and make available information on what was learned from the testing previously conducted.

Thank you for your consideration. We appreciate your leadership and the FCC's action on this important issue.

Sincerely,



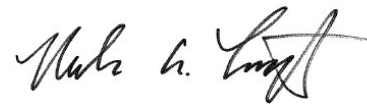
Marcus J. Molinaro
Member of Congress



Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



August Pfluger
Member of Congress



Nicholas A. Langworthy
Member of Congress



Anthony D'Esposito
Member of Congress



Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress

¹ <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-397331A1.pdf>

MARCUS J. MOLINARO
19TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3219

1207 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-5441

HOUSE COMMITTEE
ON AGRICULTURE
HOUSE COMMITTEE
ON SMALL BUSINESS