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**For Immediate Release****FCC CHAIRWOMAN CALLS FOR IMPROVED ROUTING OF  
WIRELESS CALLS TO THE 988 LIFELINE*****Proposal Would Examine How Best to Implement Georouting Requirement to Connect  
Callers in Personal Distress with Nearby Crisis Centers***

WASHINGTON, March 21, 2024—FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel today shared with her colleagues a proposal that would improve how wireless calls to the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (988 Lifeline) are routed to ensure that callers in crisis have access to behavioral health resources in the state or territory they are calling from while protecting their privacy. Calls to the 988 Lifeline are currently routed based on the caller’s area code and exchange, which presents some obstacles to callers whose area code does not correspond the caller’s location when in crisis. For instance, under current practices if a wireless caller with a 703 Virginia area code dials the 988 Lifeline, that call will be routed to a Virginia crisis center, regardless of where the caller is located. Under the FCC’s proposal, if that caller dials the 988 Lifeline while located in California, that call would be routed to a local crisis center in California, near the caller’s physical location.

“The FCC took a vital step today toward making it easier for Americans in crisis to efficiently access lifesaving support,” **said Senator Alex Padilla**. “Senator Tillis and I made a promise that our bipartisan Senate Mental Health Caucus would work to address our nation’s mental health epidemic and make sure those in crisis know they are not suffering alone. We’re already seeing the impacts we can make by shining a spotlight on these issues and working together. Today’s proposal follows our legislative efforts to quickly and safely connect callers on the 9-8-8 hotline to the local mental health support services they need.”

“The 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline has been an important resource in connecting those in crisis with necessary care, and I’m excited about this next step to further improve the Lifeline,” **said Senator Thom Tillis**. “Ensuring callers are routed to crisis centers based on their geographic location as opposed to their device’s area code will allow for a quicker and more localized response for individuals in crisis and, as co-chair of the Senate Mental Health Caucus, I’m proud that this new capability will soon become a reality.”

“As a strong advocate of the 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, I want to commend the FCC for getting ahead of us in Congress and pushing for much needed changes.” **said Congressman Tony Cárdenas**. “The American people deserve the peace of mind and confidence that when they call 988, there will be someone answering that call, someone to come quickly if they need it, and somewhere to go to get compassionate care. Today, I believe we have delivered hope to many.”

“Thanks to our combined efforts, now anyone, anywhere in this country can call or text an easy-to-remember, three-digit number for the Suicide and Mental Health Crisis Lifeline at any time they need help,” **said Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel**. “When people reach out to 988 for help, they should have confidence that the support they receive is local. As we develop technical solutions, we want experts in mental health to work with us every step of the way. I’m grateful for the leadership of Senators Padilla and Tillis, Congressman Cardenas, and Secretary Becerra for working with the FCC to meet the needs of those of us suffering in silence. Help is here.”

“988 is working because when you invest in something, and put good people behind it, you get results. Millions of people across the country have found a lifeline—a compassionate voice on the other end of the line, ready to listen, ready to care,” **said HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra**. “But our work is not done – not until 988 is widely known not just as the number to call to talk to a caring counselor, but to also get connected to behavioral health resources within a person’s state or territory. We must ensure that every person in need knows that help is just a phone call, text or chat away.”

The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking circulated today seeks to address this discrepancy by proposing the adoption of a rule that would require a georouting solution to be implemented for all wireless calls to the 988 Lifeline while balancing the privacy needs of individuals in crisis. Georouting refers to technical solutions that enable calls to be directed based on the location of the caller without transmitting caller’s precise location information. Such solutions would permit a wireless call to the 988 Lifeline to be directed to nearby crisis centers based on factors such as the cell tower that originated the call rather than the area code of the wireless device used to place the call while maintaining any privacy requirements carriers may have about the nature of such sensitive calls. The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking also seeks comment on the impact of georouting solutions on texts to 988, an increasingly popular way to reach out for help.

In September 2023, the Chairwoman [called](#) on major wireless carriers and carrier associations to address this discrepancy by taking steps to identify and develop a georouting solution that could be deployed in wireless networks within a reasonable time. This NPRM seeks comment on the status of georouting solutions proposed to date, including their viability and technical specifications, the work that remains to implement them, the costs and benefits of implementing a georouting solution, and other considerations. This proposal reflects significant efforts by the FCC, working in coordination with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), to make it easier for those in crisis to get help with a phone call or text message to 988, the three-digit number designated in 2022 for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

Reliable, timely access to the 988 Lifeline is crucial to linking people experiencing a suicidal or mental health crisis with immediate support. In May 2022, the FCC, HHS and Veterans Affairs convened a forum on geolocation topics that featured state and local stakeholders, suicide prevention and mental health experts and advocates, communications industry leaders, and technical experts. Stakeholder panels addressed 988 geolocation and technical challenges and solutions, highlighting those on the front lines of suicide prevention and mental health crisis services as well as industry and technical experts.

Last July, the FCC adopted rules that require providers to report outages that may potentially impact 988 service similar to the existing requirement for 911. This requirement affects all providers with a role in delivering the calls, including cable, satellite, wireless, wireline, interconnected VoIP providers.

If adopted by a vote of the full Commission, the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking circulated to the Commissioners today would seek comment on the proposed requirement for use of georouting for all wireless calls to the 988 Lifeline.

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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).*