

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER ANNA M. GOMEZ**

Re: *Implementation of the National Suicide Hotline Act of 2018*, WC Docket No. 18-336, Fourth Report and Order (July 24, 2025)

I'm glad that we are continuing the bipartisan progress that's been made through multiple Administrations to develop, support, and enhance the 988 Suicide Prevention Hotline.

This is the type of bipartisan issue I had hoped this agency would focus its efforts on during the last few months. However, I do feel the need to take a quick moment to share my concerns regarding the Administration's decision to strip away support for LGBTQ+ youth for the 988 Suicide Prevention Hotline.

Just last week, on July 17, young LGBTQ+ Americans stopped receiving this specialized support. That's a shameful stain on the legacy of an otherwise successful effort to help more Americans in crisis.

But it didn't have to be that way. This program has worked. Since its inception, it has provided life-saving crisis care to an estimated 1.5 million LGBTQ+ youth across the United States.

We know that this form of specialized support is still very much needed, just as it is for veterans and other groups. While they may still receive assistance from the general line, that may not be enough to help save their lives. As we know, LGBTQ+ young people are more than four times as likely to attempt suicide than their peers. If a gay teen is calling from a community where they do not feel safe, guess who will answer that call? Someone from that same community that may or may not have the understanding or the tools to help them. We recognized that for certain groups, like veterans and Spanish speakers. This was an important distinction, and we decided to provide targeted support. It should be no different for LGBTQ+ youth.

In the past, the FCC played an integral role in creating 988 and supporting all its programs so it could reach as many people as possible, regardless of their gender identity, sexual orientation, or political beliefs.

You might remember that it was in fact this President, under his first term, who signed the bipartisan legislation that created 988 into law. And a Republican-led FCC kickstarted the process to get 988 off the ground, with the previous Democratic Administration overseeing the expansion of services for the hotline.

This has always been about saving lives. It has always been about people, not politics. But now, this Administration is picking between those who deserve support versus those who don't. It is choosing to make callous, heartless decisions about who may live and who may die. Because that will be the end result of this action: young people in crisis will lose their lives.

Sadly, the cruelty doesn't end there. While the fever dream that was DOGE has temporarily abated, we are still seeing repeated attempts to cut government in ways that are short-sighted and detrimental to the mission of government agencies.

The Department of Health and Human Services is one of those agencies slated to restructure and dismantle bodies like the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which the FCC references roughly fifteen times in this order.

That means that, should this Administration be successful in dismantling yet another vital government agency and chasing away the talented people that work there, there may be no one left to help implement the geo-routing changes we seek in this order. For that reason, I worked with the Chair to include language that would clarify that, in the event that SAMHSA is reorganized or its responsibilities transferred, any successor agency will be expected to carry out the same 988-related duties without interruption. And to be clear, I sincerely hope it never comes to that.

Despite HHS already letting go of many talented federal employees at SAMHSA, the agency still has a mission to improve the quality and accessibility of mental health and substance abuse treatment and to connect those in crisis with lifesaving care and local support services. That work must continue. We cannot turn a blind eye to this pressing need. So, I am glad we are being sensible in this case to expect the best but prepare for the worst.

And finally, I also want to thank the Chair for working with my office on additional changes that highlight the need to continue to educate the public about how we're improving access and resources of the 988 lifeline. Everyone knows I'm a big advocate of consumer outreach and public awareness. It's the reason why I choose to speak in Spanish about certain consumer-focused actions we take.

So, I am glad we are not letting that important piece of the puzzle fall through the cracks and that the Consumer and Government Affairs Bureau here at the FCC will continue its important work, letting the public know how this FCC is working for them.

Thank you again to the Chair and the Bureau for their work on this item. It has my support.