

**STATEMENT OF  
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Ensuring the Reliability and Resiliency of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline*, PS Docket No. 23-5; *Amendments to Part 4 of the Commission's Rules Concerning Disruptions to Communications*, PS Docket No. 15-80; *Implementation of the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018*, WC Docket No. 18-336, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (January 26, 2023).

If you cross the William Howard Taft Bridge in Washington, you will notice that it connects two neighborhoods in the city high above Rock Creek Park. You might also notice that at the entry to the bridge is a sign reminding those who cross in distress that help is available. Just dial 988.

That sign is new. Because it was just six months ago that this agency formally designated 988 as the three-digit number for the national Suicide and Mental Health Crisis Lifeline. It's simple and easy to remember. And during the last half year it has proven to be a lifesaver.

In fact, there are now more than two million people who have reached out to 988. That is two million people in crisis; two million people who found a place to turn, someone to listen, and a way to receive support. Those who attempt suicide are disproportionately young, and some populations—veterans, indigenous people, and LGBTQ youth, are especially vulnerable. They deserve our attention, compassion, and help.

I am proud that the people on this dais helped ensure that 988 is available for both calling and texting. The later, of course, is the dominant way to connect for many people in this country, including some of the populations who are most at risk. It is essential that help is available this way.

It is just as essential that 988 is reliable. So when in December of last year the hotline had a nationwide calling outage, we kicked into high gear. While the Department of Health and Human Services went to work to make sure the public was aware of other ways to access this service, at the Federal Communications Commission we started an investigation. We also immediately started to develop the rulemaking we have here today. To be clear, we are seeking to develop reporting and notification requirements for 988 outages based on the same system we use for 911. Like with 911, it is vital that any 988 problems are shared fast with the right people - so that we understand what went wrong and can make it right. Here we propose that outage notifications are shared with the Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the 988 administrator. But what we are really trying to do with this effort is make sure problems like the one we saw in December do not happen again.

Thank you to those responsible for this rulemaking, including Rochelle Cohen, Shabbir Hamid, Nikki McGinnis, Erika Olsen, Austin Randazzo, Tara Shostek, and Rachel Wehr from the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau; Heather Hendrickson, Michelle Sclater, and Christi Shewman from the Wireline Competition Bureau; Stacy Jordan, Emily Talaga, and Aleks

Yankelevich from the Office of Economics and Analytics; Deborah Broderson, Doug Klein, and Bill Richardson from the Office of General Counsel; and Chana Wilkerson from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities.