

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Implementation of the National Suicide Hotline Act of 2018*, Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, WC Docket No. 18-336 (Apr. 25, 2024).

Not far from us here at the Federal Communications Commission, in a non-descript, low-slung building in Montgomery County, Maryland is an organization called EveryMind. They are one of over 200 call centers across the country that respond when people dial 988—the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

At the FCC, we know 988 well. We helped set up this easy-to-remember, three-digit number nationwide. We made it possible for anyone, anywhere to reach out for help with this number through call, chat, or text. But those are the technical details. Because at this agency we don't really know what it is like to be on the receiving end of these calls. The people at EveryMind do.

Along with Commissioner Gomez, I visited EveryMind to learn more about what responding to 988 looks like on the ground. After spending time with EveryMind, two things were clear. First, the people answering these calls are extraordinary. They listen and respond thoughtfully and carefully to everyone who reaches out in crisis. The work they do saves lives. Second, the people answering these calls face challenges because connecting those who reach out to 988 to nearby help is complicated.

Today, 80 percent of the calls to 988 originate from a wireless phone. Right now those calls are routed based on the area code associated with that device. But for many people the area code on our phones no longer matches the place where we live. That means if you have a phone number from Maryland, but moved to California, and dialed 988 you would still be routed to a center in Maryland like EveryMind. The people at EveryMind will do everything they can to assist you, but it goes without saying that they know more about how to get you assistance in their own backyard than they do across the country in California.

I think it's time to change this. If we do, I think we can save more lives by getting more people connected to resources nearby. That is why today we propose to introduce georouting. When georouting is used, wireless calls to 988 are routed to call centers based on the nearby towers that wireless calls use to connect. This provides a more accurate picture of a caller's actual location, while still protecting their privacy. More importantly, georouting means those responding to 988 inquiries have a lot more knowledge of local resources and are better equipped to assist the caller with getting the help they need.

On this front, we are already on the right track. Last year, I wrote to the nationwide wireless providers urging them to begin work on georouting. So I want to thank them for the headway they have made to date with development, testing, and trial efforts. I also want to make clear that for georouting to work with 988 across the country, the Department of Health and Human Services and its administrator of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline will need to incorporate the solutions we are proposing here directly into its process. This is vital. We stand ready to assist because as we develop these technical solutions, we know we benefit from having experts in mental health work with us every step of the way.

I want to thank Representative Cárdenas, Senator Padilla, Senator Tillis, and Secretary Becerra for joining me last month when I first publicly introduced the idea of requiring georouting for 988. I also want to thank the counselors of EveryMind, and Ann Mazur, who leads their efforts, for being here today, for the gracious way they opened their doors to us, and for the services they provide to people in their community. They are heroes in our own backyard.

In addition, thank you to the staff responsible for this rulemaking, including Callie Coker, Elizabeth Drogula, Trent Harkrader, Heather Hendrickson, Jodie May, Kiara Ortiz, Christi Shewman, and Merry Wulff from the Wireline Competition Bureau; Brenda Boykin, Ken Carlberg, John Evanoff, David Furth, Austin Randazzo, Rasoul Safavian, and Rachel Wehr from the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau; Thomas Derenge, Garnet Hanly, Eli Johnson, Roger Noel, Susannah Larson, and John Lockwood from the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau; Terry Cavanaugh, Richard Mallen, Erika

Olsen, David Senzel, and Chin Yoo from the Office of General Counsel; Pramesh Jobanputra, Stacy Jordan, and Eric Ralph from the Office of Economics and Analytics; and Jocelyn James, Joy Ragsdale, Jamie Saloom, and Chana Wilkerson from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities.