

August 20, 2019

The Honorable Chris Stewart

2242 Rayburn HOB
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Seth Moulton

1127 Longworth HOB
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Stewart and Moulton;

The undersigned organizations dedicated to increasing Americans' access to quality, evidence based mental health care and suicide prevention services write to extend our strong support for the *National Suicide Hotline Designation Act*.

Today, suicide is the 10th leading cause of death overall and, for people ages 10-34¹, it's the 2nd leading cause of death². Untreated mental illness and substance use disorders also have prolific impacts for our economy. Nationwide, it is estimated employers are losing \$225.5 billion annually in costs associated with lessened productivity linked to unmanaged behavioral health conditions³. Moreover, out of the 1 in 5 American adults who experience mental illness in a given year, only about 40% receive treatment⁴. Fortunately, access to quality treatment can transform and save lives. ***That is why we fervently support efforts to designate 988 as an easy-to-remember, universal number for those seeking help for mental health crises.*** There is no better time to implement this desperately needed resource than now.

According to the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) report on the *National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018*, issued to Congress on August 14, 2019, the FCC summarizes that in 2017 more than 47,000 Americans died by suicide and more than 1.4 million adults attempted suicide⁵. Moreover, the report identifies that from 1999 to 2016, suicide increased in 49 of the 50 states, and in more than half of those states, the increase was greater than 20%⁶. The FCC report further states, "we conclude that the Commission should initiate a rulemaking proceeding through a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to consider designating 988 as the 3-digit dialing code for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline."

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db330-h.pdf>

² <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/suicide.shtml>

³ <https://healthpayerintelligence.com/news/employers-could-see-high-financial-returns-for-mental-healthcare>

⁴ Ibid

⁵ <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-359095A1.pdf>

⁶ Ibid

Establishing a ubiquitous, recognizable national number for mental health and suicide prevention – as intended by the *National Suicide Hotline Designation Act* - would be a transformative step for our nation’s public health by making crisis resources more accessible, by addressing the deeply entrenched stigma associated with mental health conditions, and by saving lives.

We stand ready to help make this national service a reality. Thank you, in advance, for your leadership on this critical matter. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to pass the *National Suicide Hotline Designation Act*.

Sincerely;

American Association of Suicidology

Association for Behavioral Health & Wellness

Atrium Health

Behavioral Health Link

Behavioral Health Response

Brady United

Centerstone

Connections Health Solutions

Henry Ford Health System

Dr. Michael F. Hogan, Hogan Health Solutions and Chair, President’s New Freedom Commission Report on Mental Health

InSight Telepsychiatry

The Jason Foundation

Kevin & Margaret Hines Foundation

Kevin’s Song

Lauryn's Law Inc.

MindOC

The National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors

National Association of Crisis Organization Directors

The National Association for Rural Mental Health

The National Board for Certified Counselors

Now Matters Now

RI International

Suicide Awareness Voices of Education

The Trevor Project