

September 12, 2019

The Honorable Mike Doyle, Chairman
Energy & Commerce Subcommittee
on Communications & Technology
306 Cannon HOB
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bob Latta, Ranking Member
Energy & Commerce Subcommittee
on Communications & Technology
2467 Rayburn HOB
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Doyle and Latta;

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 *H.R. 4194 – 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 and suicide prevention.*** 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 percent⁶. The FCC report further states, "we conclude that the Commission should initiate a

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

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.”

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.

As the Communications and Technology Subcommittee considers priorities within the 116th Congress, we urge your consideration of *H.R. 4194 – the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act*.

The undersigned organizations stand ready to help make this national service a reality; including working with congressional offices to ensure this line is universally available and fully funded. Thank you, in advance, for your consideration of this landmark bill for mental health and suicide prevention.

Sincerely;

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

American Association of Suicidology

American Counseling Association

American Dance Therapy Association

American Foundation for Firearm Injury Reduction in Medicine

American Group Psychotherapy Association

American Medical Student Association

American Psychiatric Nurses Association

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare

Association for Behavioral Health & Wellness

Atrium Health

Behavioral Health Link

Behavioral Health Response

Brady United

Centerstone

Clinical Social Work Association

Concert Health

Connections Health Solutions

Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy and Action

Hartford HealthCare

Health Innovation Alliance

Henry Ford Health System

InSight Telepsychiatry

The Jason Foundation

Kevin & Margaret Hines Foundation

Mental Health America

National Association for Behavioral Healthcare

National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors

National Association of Crisis Organization Directors

National Association for Rural Mental Health

National Association of Social Workers

National Board for Certified Counselors

National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health

Netsmart

Now Matters Now

Opioid Safety Alliance

Postpartum Support International

Regroup Telehealth, Inc.

RI International

School Social Work Association of America

SMART Recovery

Suicide Awareness Voices of Education

2020 Mom

Tourette Association of America

The Trevor Project

Zero Suicide International