

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 17, 2020

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Pallone and Ranking Member Walden:

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has formally started the process of designating 9-8-8 as a new, nationwide, 3-digit number for a suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline. This number will be directed to the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, a national network of 163 crisis centers that is funded by the Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The FCC Notice of Proposed Rulemaking proposes requiring that all telecommunications carriers and interconnected Voice over Internet Protocol service providers make, within 18 months, any network changes necessary to ensure that users can dial 9-8-8 to reach the Lifeline.

We commend this effort and want to make sure that it is implemented successfully. To that effect, we respectfully request that you expedite consideration for legislation that will help ensure the success of the new number to meet the eighteen-month timeframe:

The Campaign to Prevent Suicide Act, H.R.4585, sets up an educational campaign to advertise the new number and raise awareness for suicide prevention resources and cultivate a more effective discourse on how to prevent suicide. The bill would provide guidance to TV and social media companies on how to talk about suicide by creating a best practices toolkit. A similar toolkit was developed for journalists with success. The FCC stated that a suicide prevention education campaign would be necessary for this new number change.

The Suicide Prevention Lifeline Improvement Act, H.R.4564, will ensure the Lifeline can provide effective and timely responses to people in distress. In 2018, trained Lifeline counselors answered over 2.2 million calls and over 100,000 online chats. The new number will increase call volume, wait times and will further constrain the network which could reduce access to this life-saving resource. This bill will ensure the Lifeline can meet the demand and ensure the resources provided are meaningful and effective.

The National Suicide Hotline Designation Act, H.R. 4194, which formally designates the number, but also creates the telecommunications infrastructure necessary to implement the new 9-8-8 number itself.

We've seen a 33% increase in suicides since 1999. That's an epidemic. We must do more to address this crisis. A 3-digit suicide hotline number will help ease access to crisis services,

reduce the stigma surrounding suicide and mental health conditions, and ultimately save lives. We support its implementation and request that you expedite these bills to ensure the new number's success.

Sincerely,


  
Donald S. Beyer Jr.

  
Greg Gianforte

  
John Katko

  
Grace F. Napolitano

  
Chris Stewart

  
Seth Moulton

  
Eddie Bernice Johnson

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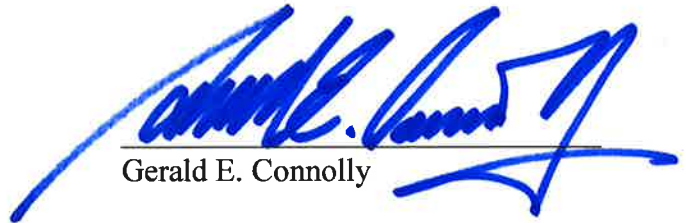
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**Ed Case**

Ed Case



Mary Gay Scanlon



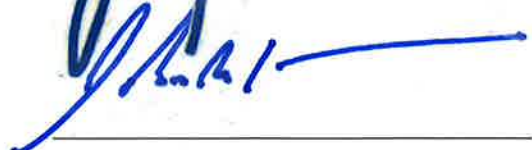
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