

November 22, 2022

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Senate Majority Leader  
U.S. Capitol Building S-221  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Republican Leader  
U.S. Capitol Building S-230  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader Schumer and Leader McConnell,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we thank you for your leadership prioritizing the mental health crisis needs and the ongoing work to reauthorize key Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) programs that address the national mental health and substance use disorder crises. We applaud the progress so far and look forward to the successful completion of this effort. Reauthorization of SAMHSA presents a unique opportunity for the inclusion of the Suicide Prevention Lifeline Improvement Act (S.2425), a bipartisan bill that would bolster aid to the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and the local crisis centers in the 988 Lifeline network across the nation.

In particular, the undersigned organizations support a modified version of the Lifeline Improvement Act that would:

- Specify that the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline provides crisis intervention services in addition to linking individuals to local services. Highlighting that the order of the services also utilizes the least restrictive interventions to keep individuals safe while also being clear that the service does not replace ongoing mental health care.
- Update the language to be inclusive of additional modalities to reach the Lifeline (e.g., calls, chats, and texts).
- Clarify that a network-wide standard for level of care assessments will be essential for 988 crisis counselors to determine the “right fit” service for an individual’s unique needs. This is generally the first step before a crisis counselor checks for an available service in the community that can meet their accurately assessed needs.
- Expand the services provided to expressly include follow-up services for individuals whose crisis situation necessitates additional support to ensure their safety.
- And most importantly, recognize that sufficient and sustained funding will be needed to support the successful implementation of the 988 Lifeline. This is why we are strongly recommending an authorization level of \$1.089 billion, a figure that will account for volume growth and expanded services at crisis centers.

As an increasing number of Americans face the challenges that the current mental health crisis presents, it is imperative that the federal government seize this opportunity and invest in closing the widest existing gaps in

providing critical mental health care services to its constituents. As we work collectively to implement 988 across the nation, we ask that you ensure these priorities are met in your work to reauthorize SAMSHA programs. Thank you for your ongoing efforts and attention to this crucial matter.

Sincerely,

2020 Mom

American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare  
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy  
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work  
American Counseling Association  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
American Group Psychotherapy Association  
American Mental Health Counselors Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness  
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder  
Inseparable  
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance  
Mental Health America  
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors  
National Council for Mental Wellbeing  
National Health Care for the Homeless Council  
The Kennedy Forum  
The Trevor Project  
Vibrant Emotional Health

CC:

The Honorable Patty Murray  
The Honorable Richard Burr  
The Honorable Jack Reed  
The Honorable Jerry Moran