

February 16, 2018

The Honorable Greg Walden
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
2322A Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Marsha Blackburn
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Doyle
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Mental Health Liaison Group URGES passage of H.R. 2345 The National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2017

Dear Chairman Walden; Ranking Member Pallone; Chairman Blackburn and Ranking Member Doyle:

On behalf of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), a national coalition of behavioral health advocacy organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals, and providers, we are writing to provide our support for H.R. 2345, The National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act. **We urge passage of this important legislation.**

This life-saving legislation was introduced by Representatives Chris Stewart (R-UT) and Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX). H.R. 2345 calls for a study to evaluate (1) the feasibility of designating a three-digit dialing code for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system; and (2) the effectiveness of the current National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK), including how well it addresses the needs of veterans. The FCC will be required to submit a report to Congress including a recommended dialing code, a cost-benefit analysis comparing the three-digit code to the current lifeline number, and cost estimates for service providers, states, and localities. As you consider your position on H.R. 2345, please consider how it will impact people who need access to immediate mental health counseling 24/7 in your home state.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides free and confidential support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 160 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices.

The U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Mental Health Association of New York City (MHA-NYC) launched the Lifeline on January 1, 2005. As the administrator of the grant, MHA-NYC works with its partners, the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, the National Council for Behavioral Health, and others to manage the project, along with Living Works, Inc., an internationally respected organization specializing in suicide intervention skills training.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is independently evaluated by a federally-funded investigation team from Columbia University's Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene. The Lifeline receives ongoing consultation and guidance from national suicide prevention experts, consumer advocates, and other stakeholders through the Lifeline's Steering Committee, Consumer/Survivor Committee, and Standards, Training and Practices Committee. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a leader in suicide prevention and mental health crisis care. Since its inception, the Lifeline has engaged in a variety of initiatives to improve crisis services and advance suicide prevention for all, including innovative public messaging, best practices in mental health, and cutting-edge partnerships.

We applaud you for your bipartisan work on suicide prevention and access to mental health services. Thank you for your commitment to protecting the health and safety of all our citizens. **The MHLG supports the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2017 and urges its swift unanimous passage.**

Sincerely,

American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Dance Therapy Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Nurses Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Psychological Association
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Center for Clinical Social Work
Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
Cities Thrive Coalition
Clinical Social Work Association
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists
Council on Social Work Education

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition
EMDR International Association
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Legal Action Center
Mental Health America
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
National Alliance on Mental Illness
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Coalition for Maternal Mental Health
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Disability Rights Network
National Eating Disorders Association
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
The National Register of Health Service Psychologists
No Health Without Mental Health
Residential Eating Disorders Consortium
Sandy Hook Promise
School Social Work Association of America
The Trevor Project
Treatment Communities of America