

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