

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 22, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer,

Thank you for your bipartisan response to the health and economic effects of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in the United States. As you prepare for a fourth relief package, we respectfully request **\$80 million for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) to support critical suicide prevention activities and assist with the transition to an operational three-digit code for the NSPL.**

The global pandemic has drastically disrupted the life of every American. As a result, millions of individuals are experiencing heightened levels of fear, anxiety, social isolation, stress, and more. These factors, when felt concurrently, effect a person's mental health and often lead to increased episodes of suicidal ideation. The emotional and mental resiliency of our nation is being tested. Americans are looking to Congress to invest in programs that offer a lifeline of support when a person has nowhere else to turn.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, one in five U.S. adults reported they experience some level of mental illness. Moreover, in 2019, suicide was the second leading cause of death for people ages 10 to 34. LGBTQ youth are at particular risk; they are more than four times more likely to attempt suicide than their straight peers. An unacceptable average of 132 Americans died each day by suicide last year. The social and economic turmoil caused by COVID-19 will only amplify the factors that lead to mental health challenges and suicide, and our nation will see these alarming statistics rise if we fail to adequately respond in time.

Suicide prevention efforts, such as crisis hotlines and mobile response teams, reduce risk factors that culminate in severe mental health challenges and suicide attempts by providing individualized interventions. Lives are saved when people are connected to the resources they need to improve their mental well-being in a timely and empathetic manner.

In order to fully support the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to meet the current and future crisis call volume and provide additional resources for states to provide comprehensive crisis response services, we recommend \$80 million, which would accommodate \$50 million to respond to crisis call volume and \$30 million to build out crisis chat capacity. This support is especially important as there is ongoing work to transition the NSPL from ten digits to three digits to increase access to services.

We thank you for your support of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and respectfully request your continued support to bring hope and health to Americans who struggle with mental health challenges and suicidal ideation, especially during the ongoing public health pandemic.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jeffrey A. Merkley
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

/s/ Cory Gardner
Cory Gardner
United States Senator

/s/ Jack Reed
Jack Reed
United States Senator

/s/ Jerry Moran
Jerry Moran
United States Senator

United States Senate

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/s/ Tammy Baldwin
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

/s/ Angus S. King, Jr.
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Duckworth
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

/s/ Michael F. Bennet
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

/s/ Edward J. Markey
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

/s/ Chris Van Hollen
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/ Robert P. Casey, Jr.
Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

/s/ Dianne Feinstein
Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

/s/ Richard Blumenthal
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

/s/ Cory A. Booker
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator