

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Senate passes Baldwin's bipartisan reform to create three-digit suicide prevention hotline

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin's bipartisan reform to designate a three-digit phone number for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline has passed the full Senate. This legislation will help ensure states have the flexibility to strengthen local crisis call centers and save lives.

“In America, we lose about 45,000 people every year to suicide, including more than 6,100 veterans, making it one of the leading causes of death in this country,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “We need to do everything we can to prevent suicide and that means improving the tools we have to help people who are suffering from depression or other mental health issues. I'm very proud my bipartisan legislation has passed the full Senate so we can make it as quick and easy as possible for Americans in crisis to get the help and support they need through the National Suicide Hotline.”

The current National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and Veterans Crisis line are 10-digits, which is a barrier to Americans in crisis seeking support. The *National Suicide Hotline Designation Act* directs the FCC to designate 9-8-8 for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, and allows veterans to press “1” after dialing 9-8-8 to be routed automatically to the Veterans Crisis Line for veteran-specific mental health support. Death by suicide is a severe problem in the veteran community with about 17 veterans committing suicide every day, on average. In 2017, in Wisconsin for example, one out of every five people who died by suicide was a veteran.

The bipartisan legislation also recognizes that certain groups, including LGBTQ youth, Native Americans and people in rural areas, are at greater risk of suicide. It requires the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to report to Congress on its plans to facilitate specific training programs for serving these communities through the hotline, as well as how best to implement a process so that callers from these and other high-risk populations can access specialized services.

Baldwin introduced this bipartisan reform with Senators Cory Gardner (R-CO), Jerry Moran (R-KS) and Jack Reed (D-RI). A bipartisan group of 28 other senators cosponsored the legislation.

This legislation is endorsed by the American Legion, National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, NowMattersNow.org, United Suicide Survivors International, Open Minds, National Association for Rural Mental Health, Mental Health America, Tourette Association of America, the Kevin & Margaret Hines Foundation, the American Telemedicine Association, the Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness, Illinois Association of Behavioral Health, Behavioral Health Association of Providers, Postpartum Support International, Education Development Center, National Board for Certified Counselors, National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, Association For Ambulatory Behavioral Health, SMART Recovery, American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry, American Psychiatric Nurses Association, Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice, Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies (CIPS), 2020 Mom, the American Association of Suicidology, the American Counseling Association, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the American Psychological Association, the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, Behavioral Health Link, Centerstone, Depression Association of America, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the National Association of Social Workers, the National Council for Behavioral Health, RI International, Suicide Awareness Voices of Education, Mental Health Colorado, Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance, and The Trevor Project.

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