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# Blunt Welcomes Launch of New 988 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Phone Number

JULY 18TH 2022 BY DEE LOFLIN

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U.S. Senator Roy Blunt (Mo.), the top Republican on the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies, welcomed the launch of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's new, three digit 988 number. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a national network of more than 200 local- and state-funded crisis centers. The new number, which will be available starting tomorrow, July 16, will allow individuals experiencing a mental health crisis to call or text 988 to connect with a trained mental health professional.

“The number of calls to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline skyrocketed in recent years as Americans struggled with the mental health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Each one of those calls can be a life or death moment for a person in crisis,” said Blunt. “We need to be sure the capacity is there to answer every call as quickly as possible. As the top Republican on the appropriations subcommittee that funds health programs, I have been proud to work with my colleagues to substantially increase federal funding to transition to the lifeline's new 988 number and strengthen the network of crisis centers answering the calls. We will continue working to ensure the resources are in place to meet the needs of the lifeline as the new 988 number goes into effect. I hope this transition will make it easier for people to reach out and get the lifesaving help they need, when they need it.”

The Blunt-backed Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which was signed into law last month, provided \$150 million to support the launch of 988, including crisis center operations. The FY2022 government funding bill, signed into law in March, provided \$101.6 million, a \$77.6 million increase, for the 988 transition.

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act also authorized the nationwide expansion of the Excellence in Mental Health program, giving every state the opportunity to establish or expand community-based mental health clinics if they choose to do so. The Excellence in Mental Health Act was signed into law in 2014 and marked the most significant expansion of community mental health and addiction services in decades. It created Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) that provide a wide range of services, including 24/7/365 crisis services, immediate screenings, risk assessments, and diagnoses. Missouri is one of the nine states currently participating in the Excellence in Mental Health pilot program, which has a proven track record of improving access to care, reducing hospital and ER visits, and providing mental and behavioral health support to local law enforcement.

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