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For Immediate Release**FCC ADOPTS RULES REQUIRING GEOROUTING FOR ALL WIRELESS CALLS TO 988*****Commission Proposes to Further Expand Georouting Effort to Texting***

WASHINGTON, October 17, 2024—The Federal Communications Commission today approved rules that will require all U.S. wireless carriers to implement georouting for calls to the 988 Lifeline. These rules will facilitate access to the 988 Lifeline’s critical local intervention services by requiring wireless providers to implement georouting solutions for 988 calls to route wireless calls to local crisis centers based on the geographic area associated with the origin of a 988 call rather than by area code and exchange, while protecting the privacy needs of the caller. The Commission also approved a proposal to require covered text providers to provide georouting data for 988 text messages.

Mental health and crisis counseling experts have long expressed that connecting callers in crisis with local crisis centers is important to connect those in need with life-saving public health and safety resources and enable them to speak with local counselors who may be more familiar with cultural issues or community stressors in the caller’s area. The majority of calls to the 988 Lifeline are made from wireless phones and as people move around the country, their cell phone number often travels with them. This presented a challenge for the 988 system when a caller using a wireless phone dials 988 from outside the area code associated with that phone.

Communities across the country are making significant investments in building local resources to help people in crisis, and today’s action will allow the 988 Lifeline to reach its full potential to connect those in need to the care they need to get well and stay well after a crisis. These rules will establish an implementation timeline for georouting calls to the 988 Lifeline of 30 days for nationwide wireless providers and 24 months for smaller, non-nationwide providers following the effective date of the rules. In addition, today’s action will revise the Commission’s existing 988 voice and texting rules to allow for routing of 988 calls and texts to the 988 Lifeline without the need for translation to a toll-free number.

Today’s Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking proposes rules requiring covered text providers, including wireless providers, to support georouting to ensure that the 988 Lifeline may route covered 988 text messages to the appropriate local crisis center to enhance the support and resources available to text users in crisis. In addition, it proposes to require covered text providers to send georouting data to the 988 Lifeline to the same extent that they are required to send covered 988 texts to the Lifeline. Lastly, this proposal suggests an implementation deadline of six months from the effective date of final rules for covered text providers to comply with the proposed text-to-988 georouting requirements.

Action by the Commission October 17, 2024 by Third Report and Order and Third Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 24-111). Chairwoman Rosenworcel, Commissioners Carr, Starks, Simington and Gomez approving. Chairwoman Rosenworcel, Commissioners Carr, and Starks issuing separate statements.

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).