



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David Carlucci

Carlucci & Advocates Address Suicide Prevention & Call on State to Make Suicide Hotline '9-8-8'

SENATOR DAVID CARLUCCI March 3, 2020

| ISSUE: **MENTAL HEALTH SUICIDE PREVENTION**



Multiple Mental Health Advocates Call for Immediate State Action on this Life-Saving Legislation (Albany, NY) – Suicide is a public health crisis, plaguing New York State and the country. On Wednesday, Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland/Westchester) and Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez (D-Bronx), along with mental health advocates held a press conference on the need to pass legislation (S.6833/A.8778) to establish a three-digit suicide hotline.

Currently, the national suicide hotline, 1-800-273-TALK, is an eleven digit number and is used by people who may be thinking of suicide, who are worried about a friend or loved one, or who are in need of emotional support. Leaders said by changing the number to 988 and treating it just like 911, it will save lives.

Senator David Carlucci, Chair of the Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Committee and bill sponsor, said, “We have a mental health crisis in this country, and in New York State suicide is the second leading cause of death among teenagers and young adults. Making the suicide hotline similar to 911 will improve access to life-saving help. 988 is easier to remember, allows individuals access to help more quickly, and eliminates stigma. New York has the infrastructure to flip the switch and start using 988 so instead of waiting on the federal government, lets help people in need right now.”

Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez and bill co-sponsor, said, “Suicide is at one of its highest moments right now, and as a State we are trying diligently and working effectively to bring resources and help to our communities most in need like LGBTQ youth, veterans, Latinas, rural residents Upstate. Latina suicide is one of the highest causes of death for young Latinas. This is a very simple piece of legislation that is critical right now. In other cases of emergency, we have 911 or 411. Why not make the suicide hotline as easy to dial as 988? There is no time to wait; we need to get this legislation passed this session.”

In 2017, more than 1.4 million adults attempted suicide and, more than 47,000 Americans died by suicide, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These numbers have continued to rise in the past 20 years, and rates are higher among Black youth, Latina adolescents, LGBTQ youth, veterans, police officers, and rural residents.

Supporters of the new legislation include, the National Alliance on Mental Illness-New York State (NAMI-NYS), Mental Health Association in New York State (MHANYS), New York

Association Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services (NYAPRS), the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's (AFSP) Capital Region Chapter, and United Way of New York State.

Matthew Shapiro, Managing Director, NAMI-NYS, said, "Creating a three-digit suicide crisis number will be of tremendous benefit to the one in four families in New York State impacted by mental illness. Dealing with a crisis is one of the most challenging aspects of living with a mental illness as well as being a caretaker of someone living with a mental illness. I have personal experience dealing with several psychiatric crisis situations involving my mother who has borderline personality disorder, and I know how arduous these moments of crisis are. Any tool that would simplify a crisis situation and makes it easier to manage the situation would help save lives and generate optimal outcomes."

Research by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in 2017, found almost 80% of callers to the suicide hotline reported that follow-up calls stopped them from killing themselves.

Lucille Ettore, a board member of NAMI-NY who lost her daughter Nicole to suicide, said, "We are proud to stand with Senator Carlucci and advocates today to help improve crisis situations, and in turn prevent suicide attempts. Prior to Nicole's passing, she was hospitalized five times after five suicide attempts. I cannot help but wonder if any of these hospitalizations or the course of her ultimate actions could have been avoided if she had an easy three-digit number to call to help her navigate through each crisis and prevent the attempts."

Glenn Liebman, CEO of Mental Health Association in New York State, said, "Unfortunately, the percentage increase has gone through the roof among young people for anxiety, depression, and suicide attempts. We are looking for every tool in the arsenal, and what could be simpler, more responsible, and easier, than putting these three numbers together? This makes complete sense so let's get this done."

Harvey Rosenthal, CEO of New York Association Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services, said, “I hope this bill moves this session. This is critically important. This is also very personal to me. I have a mental illness. I have people that are close to me who have lost their spouses or I lost them. Suicide is an epidemic, and I am glad we are approaching it with this very common-sense strategy. The rates of suicide are highest in New York in the rural areas where there is limited transportation and services, so think about how precious this is, a phone call. This will save lives across the State.”

Sandra Goldmeer, Area Director of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention’s Capital Region, said, “It would be great if New York could be one of the first states to adopt 988, even before the federal government. The suicide hotline is not just for individuals in crisis, but for the people who are trying to help. We need to provide people with a quick and easy way to address the crisis they have at hand. There are 42,000 zip codes in this country, that means we lose 1 person for every zip code, everywhere, because of suicide. So let’s have this protection in every zip code in our State first.”

In a statement, bill sponsor Assemblywoman Carmen E. Arroyo said, “Since November 25, 2019, when I introduced the 9-8-8 suicide prevention hotline legislation, 500 New Yorkers have committed suicide and thousands more have attempted suicide. We are now in our third month of the 2020 Legislative Session and past time that the legislature acts diligently on this life-saving measure.”

Arroyo, a member of the NYS Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force added, “In 2017, the Task Force released a report documenting the terrible impact Latina adolescent suicides and suicide attempts are having on communities. Since then, data showing more and more children are attempting and committing suicide clearly show a crisis. We must strengthen all the tools at our disposal to help those in crisis access the assistance they need. This legislation is such a tool.”

This legislation is currently in the Energy and Telecommunications Committee and would take effect immediately if passed through the full legislature and signed into law.

If you or someone you know is suicidal, call 1-800-273-TALK.

To view Senator Carlucci's report on Suicide in New York State, please [click here](#).

RELATED LEGISLATION

2019-S6833

- Introduced

- - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate

- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate

- - Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate

- Delivered to Governor

- Signed By Governor

-

[Establishes the infrastructure and functions of a 9-8-8 hotline for a suicide prevention hotline in New York state](#)

November 06, 2019

In Senate Committee [Finance](#)

Sponsored by [David Carlucci](#)

Do you support this bill?

2019-S6629

- Introduced

- - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate

- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate

- - Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate

- Delivered to Governor

- Signed By Governor

-

[Establishes Nicole's law, which provides for treatment of individuals with self-inflicted, life-threatening injuries](#)

July 12, 2019

In Senate Committee [Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities](#)

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Do you support this bill?

2019-S6628

- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
-

[Requires training for teachers, administrators and instructors in the area of mental health first aid](#)

July 12, 2019

Stricken

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Do you support this bill?