



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David Carlucci

Senator David Carlucci Renews Call to Make Suicide Hotline “9-8-8” During COVID-19 Pandemic

SENATOR DAVID CARLUCCI May 22, 2020

| ISSUE: **CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC; COVID-19; SUICIDE PREVENTION; MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS**



(Albany, NY) Senator David Carlucci (D- Rockland/Westchester) is reaffirming his support for legislation (S.6833/A.8778) to establish a three-digit suicide hotline number similar to 911, as experts say COVID-19 has the “the potential for adverse outcomes on suicide risk is high,” according to an article published in [JAMA Psychiatry](#) last month.

Experts said in the report that financial stress caused by layoffs and retirement losses due to stock market drops could be associated with higher U.S. suicide rates. Along with social distancing leading to feelings of loneliness and isolation, decreased access to community and religious support, barriers to mental health treatment, illness and medical treatment, and potentially new rising levels of anxiety, among others. Additionally, [new data](#) shows the risk of addiction, depressive disorder and PTSD has doubled between February and April 2020, according to [The Mental Health Index: U.S. Worker Edition](#).

Senator David Carlucci said, “It’s a perfect storm. We have sadly seen the impact on our health care workers and first responders. The burden on their shoulders that they are taking home every night can easily cause emotional trauma, and they are fearful without adequate PPE. We all saw the tragic story of Dr. Lorna Breen. With the rate of suicides expected to peak now, let’s institute a 3 digit suicide hotline that people can remember like 911 and call more easily in a crisis.”

Currently, the national suicide hotline, 1-800-273-TALK, is an eleven-digit number used by people who may be thinking of suicide, who are worried about a friend or loved one, or who need emotional support. By simplifying the number to 9-8-8, similar to 9-1-1, it will save lives.

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.

Sadly, John Mondello, a Bronx EMT, and Lorna Breen, an emergency room doctor at a Manhattan Hospital, died by suicide last month. Several other medical professionals from around the world have also taken their own lives.

New York has instituted a COVID-19 Emotional Support Hotline and a special texting service for health care workers who need support; however, Carlucci said this is about making it simpler, using existing infrastructure, and being proactive in case of a future crisis.

If you or someone you know is suicidal, call 1-800-273-TALK. New Yorkers can call the COVID-19 Emotional Support Hotline at (844) 863-9314 for mental health counseling. Health care workers can text NYFRONTLINE to 741-741 to access 24/7 emotional support services.

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

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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?