

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 7, 2025

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

We write with grave concerns regarding reports that the draft FY26 Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) budget proposes defunding the LGBTQ+ youth suicide and crisis hotline. The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline's (the Lifeline) LGBTQ+ Youth Specialized Services program provides lifesaving services to LGBTQ+ youth, who face a higher risk of significant mental health challenges and barriers to receiving care than their peers. Given the Administration has claimed addressing youth mental health as a priority, elimination of specialized services specifically designed for at-risk youth is irresponsible. We urge you to reconsider and support continued funding for the program.

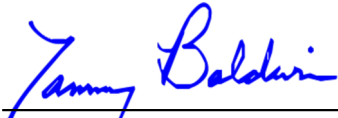
As you know, the LGBTQ+ youth specialized services pilot program was created in fiscal year 2022 to provide services to LGBTQ+ youth, who are at a disproportionately high risk for depression, suicidal ideation, and attempted suicide compared to other youths. A 2024 survey by The Trevor Project reported that nearly 40 percent of LGBTQ+ young people seriously considered attempting suicide in the previous year, and 12 percent of LGBTQ+ young people attempted suicide – rates much higher than those present among non-LGBTQ+ youth.

After a successful initial phase, Congress recognized the importance of providing specialized services for LGBTQ+ youth and directed the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to expand beyond the pilot to 24/7 operation in fiscal year 2023. To ensure that youth would be able to access the Lifeline by phone, text, or chat whenever they needed it, Congress also increased the program's funding from \$7.2 million for the pilot to \$33.1 million in fiscal year 2024 on a bipartisan basis. These specialized services are similar to other dedicated programs for veterans and service members, disaster survivors, individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, and people with neurodivergence. This specialized intervention connects LGBTQ+ youth with specially trained crisis counselors, who can provide understanding, empathetic, and confidential support. Despite the requirement for an operating plan for fiscal year 2025, HHS has provided no information about how or whether it plans to use funds for specialized services or the 988 Suicide Lifeline in general.

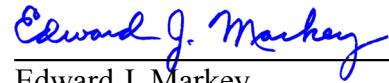
Since its inception in 2022, the Lifeline's LGBTQ+ Youth hotline has received over 1.2 million crisis contacts and utilization of the Lifeline's LGBTQ+ Youth program has spiked over the last

several months. While we strongly disagree with the many actions taken by the Trump Administration targeting LGBTQ+ individuals, we believe that suicide prevention should be a nonpartisan issue. Elimination of services that help keep youth alive is reckless, and we urge you to reconsider your proposal to eliminate this lifeline.


Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



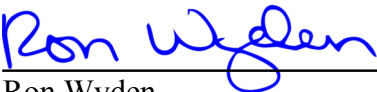
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



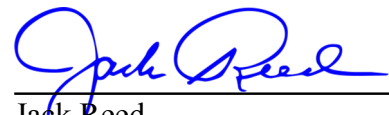
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator