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The 9-8-8 Connect Act

Significant progress has been made in increasing access to quality mental health care in America. The 9-8-8 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline has been critical for supporting Americans in crisis; however, there is currently a lack of capacity to provide follow-up services for those in crisis.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration emphasizes the role of connections to care following a crisis episode in supporting individuals who are experiencing mental health, substance use, or suicidal crisis towards recovery.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention reports that 80% of surveyed crisis line callers said that follow-up services helped save their lives. A frequent critique of 9-8-8 is that, while a single contact may resolve a crisis situation for many individuals, a lack of follow-up support doesn't provide callers with the necessary mental health resources they may need long-term.

As awareness of 988 increases, it is critical to ensure that the line can quickly connect callers to a range of mental health services and a full continuum of care, including mobile crisis response teams.

The bipartisan 9-8-8 Connect Act would:

- Establish a new grant program for eligible crisis centers to provide follow-up services to individuals receiving suicide prevention and crisis intervention services, including check-in calls, outreach to ensure engagement in services and support, collaboration with family and caregivers, and referral navigation.
- Require carriers to allow calls and texts to 9-8-8 even if the plan is inactive or the carrier is experiencing service interruptions or failures.

Require multi-line systems like hotel and office phones to support the direct dialing of 9-8-8; rather than requiring a caller to dial 9 or another number before dialing 9-8-8.