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The Local 9-8-8 Response Act

Significant progress has been made in increasing access to quality mental health care in America. The bipartisan 9-8-8 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline has been critical for supporting Americans in crisis, however, the current system routes you to a call center based on your area code rather than where you're actually calling from. This is a huge problem if a call center needs to send a mental health response team to help a caller that might be thousands of miles away in another city.

This bipartisan legislation seeks to improve access to and accuracy of mental health crisis response through the 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. By requiring calls and messages to the lifeline to be routed by the call center geographically nearest to the caller, rather than by area code, we can ensure a quicker response by mental health professionals. The Local 9-8-8 Response Act would eliminate an unnecessary handoff by connecting callers with the nearest call center, while still protecting user privacy, so they can receive the care they need as quickly and safely as possible.

This bipartisan bill improves the access and accuracy of 9-8-8 response by:

- Requiring the FCC to route calls based on the proximity of the caller to the call center, not the area code. The bill specifies that a caller's specific location should not be revealed or discernible.
- Requiring 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, just as they currently do for 911 calls.
- Requiring 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.