



COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & COMMERCE
DEMOCRATS
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

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Pallone Remarks at Communications and Technology Markup

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks today at a Subcommittee on Communications and Technology markup of four communications bills:*

I'm glad that we are meeting to markup four bills but it's unfortunate that the Subcommittee chose not to take up a proper balance of proposals led by Democrats. I hope we can find ways to work on this inequity moving forward.

One of the bills before us aims to strengthen the efforts of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to crack down on pirate radio operators. Another bill would set up a process for the FCC to consider how to support broadband or internet connected farming techniques.

The third bill would help the federal government better target our efforts to support broadband.

And the fourth bill will make important improvements to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. This lifesaving tool offers confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24-hours a day, seven days a week. The idea was simple: Help people in a crisis before it's too late.

This lifeline is needed now more than ever. Last week, a report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that suicide rates increased by 28 percent between 1999 and 2016. Forty-nine states experienced an increase in suicide rates during that period.

Suicide is a problem that affects all walks of life. It is the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S. Among some groups, the toll is even higher. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among American Indian/Alaska Natives youth between the ages of 10 and 24.

These statistics point to a problem that is all too real and, sadly, all too common. That fact was evident last week when both Kate Spade and Anthony Bourdain, both very successful in their respective industries, took their own lives. It is heartbreaking when someone is suffering so much that they choose to end their own life.

The National Suicide Prevention Hotline Improvement Act before us today would make it even easier for people wanting to connect with someone through the hotline. The bill will give people an easy to remember three digit-code, like 9-1-1, to call when they or their loved one is in crisis, rather than the current 10. This is a common-sense measure that will help Americans get the critical support they need during a time of crisis.

I look forward to supporting this bill, and the other three bills before us today. With that, I yield back.

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