



**Testimony of  
GERARD KEEGAN  
CTIA**

**Washington House Bill 1182**

**Before the  
Washington House Committee on Health Care & Wellness**

**January 28, 2021**

Chair and committee members, on behalf of CTIA, the trade association for the wireless communications industry, thank you for the opportunity to discuss House Bill 1182. CTIA and its member companies support the designation of 988 as the three-digit dial for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. CTIA member companies are committed to implementing network changes to ensure Americans can dial 988 when in crisis. In fact, some of my members have already implemented 988 well before the Federal Communications Commission deadline.

CTIA and its members also understand the importance of a workable state 988 funding framework to ensure the efficient collection and remittance of state 988 fees. To that end, we look forward to working with the sponsors on language that will ensure the effective administration of the state 988 fund. We would also encourage the sponsors to review 988 legislation in Virginia that is making its way through the legislative process. The Virginia bill aligns 988 funding with the tried-and-true collection methodology developed over 20 years of



911 fees. It simply piggybacks off the collection and remittance of the current 911 fund and provides for the sufficient separation of both funds to ensure they are not commingled.

In addition, CTIA and its members support the application of state 988 fees uniformly to wireless, wireline, and VoIP services. The bill currently applies the fee to only wireless and VoIP subscribers. There is no policy reason why customers using landline phones, which will also be capable of dialing 988, should not contribute to the state 988 fund. By extending the state 988 fee to wireline customers, the state will raise \$3.2 million per year. This extension will also allow for a lower 988 fee on all services. This is especially important for wireless consumers because many Washington families have multiple lines on a single bill. Washington wireless consumers currently face the third highest wireless tax burden in the country, so it is important that fees be kept as low as possible. Moreover, we look forward to working with the sponsors on language to address the allowable uses of the 988 fund. We recommend that fund uses be tailored to ensure funding for equipment for 988 call taking and appropriate call routing, communications necessary for 988 call taking and appropriate call routing, and direct costs for Crisis Hotline Center personnel for 988 call taking and appropriate call routing.

In closing, we welcome the opportunity to work with the sponsors to address the issues raised in my testimony. The wireless industry looks forward to the successful implementation of 988 in Washington state and throughout the country to help our fellow Americans in crisis. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.