



# News

## Press Releases

### Latta Hosts FCC Chairman Pai in Northwest Ohio

**Bowling Green, OH, January 23, 2020** | [Rebecca Card](#)  
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Tags: [Communications and Technology](#)

**Today, Congressman Bob Latta (R-OH5) hosted Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Ajit Pai in Perrysburg, Ohio, at Mercy Health to discuss the intersection of internet connectivity and telehealth services and demo telehealth technologies.**

“Connected care services increase access to care for people in rural and low-income areas and we know

telehealth can lead to better health outcomes and significant cost savings for both patients and health care providers,” **said Congressman Latta**. “Increasing access to reliable and affordable broadband will allow us to better capture all of its benefits and ensure more people have access to the care and services they need.”

“Connected health has the power to transform the lives of patients across the country,” **said Chairman Pai**. “It was a pleasure to join Congressman Bob Latta in Ohio to hear how connectivity enables physicians to assess and treat stroke patients much more quickly than before. I’m committed to continuing my work at the FCC to harness the power of technology to improve the health of all Americans.”

In July 2019, the FCC proposed to establish a 3-year, \$100 million Connected Care Pilot program that would support bringing telehealth services directly to low-income patients and veterans. The program would provide an 85% discount on connectivity from broadband-enabled telehealth services that connect patients directly to their doctors. The FCC is still collecting public comment on this Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM).

Expanding access to broadband is incredibly important and Congressman Latta is encouraged by the efforts by the FCC to encourage utilization of telehealth services through their proposed Connected Care Pilot Program. Along with the Commission’s actions, Congressman Latta introduced a bill – [the Broadband DATA Act](#) – that passed the House to fix our nation’s broadband maps. The Broadband DATA Act would improve broadband map accuracy so that federal resources can be distributed to communities that currently do not currently have the digital capabilities they need in order to keep pace with the rest of the country. This will get internet connectivity to areas that need it most for things like telehealth, homework, or even

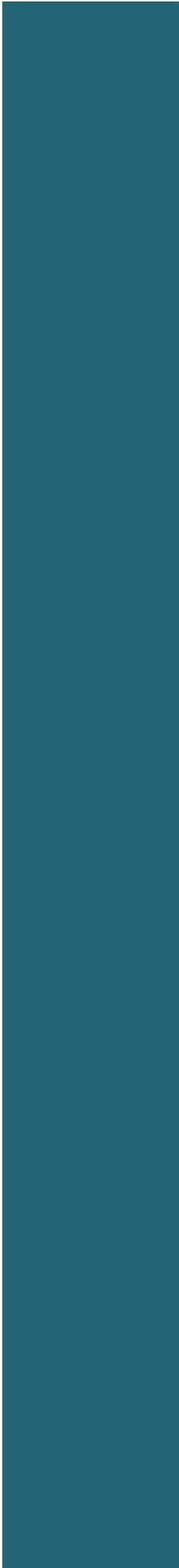
streaming your favorite show.

**Congressman Latta and Chairman Pai also visited Rescue Mental Health and Addiction Services, a national suicide prevention lifeline crisis center in Toledo, Ohio, to tour their facility and discuss the expected benefits of designating 9-8-8 as the national suicide hotline number.**

“We can also do more to ensure people can better access mental health services no matter where they call home,” **continued Congressman Latta.** “Sadly, the suicide rates in each state are rising and Ohio is no exception. In Ohio alone, calls to the suicide lifeline have increased 67% from 2016 to 2019. The need for suicide prevention services has never been greater and I appreciate the attention the FCC has placed to designate 9-8-8 as the national suicide hotline number. Ultimately, 9-8-8 will bring us one step closer to reducing the stigma surrounding mental health conditions, increasing access to crisis services for those at risk of suicide no matter where they live, and most importantly, save more lives across the country.”

“It was an honor to meet the heroic team at Rescue Mental Health & Addiction Services,” **continued Chairman Pai.** “They help thousands of people each year who are struggling with suicidal ideation and mental health issues. This has become a critical issue, with the suicide rate in the United States at its highest level since World War II. That’s why the FCC has proposed designating 9-8-8 as the suicide prevention and mental health hotline. This would be a major boost for our nation’s suicide prevention efforts. We can and will do more to ensure Ohioans and all Americans have better access to mental health services.”

Currently, trained National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (Lifeline) counselors can be reached by calling 1-800-273-TALK. In 2019, these counselors answered over 2.2 million calls and over 100,000 online chats.



According to a 2018 survey of Lifeline centers, almost 98% of the crisis calls are de-escalated such that costly responses from law enforcement and emergency medical services are not necessary. There are 11 Lifeline network call centers in Ohio with two serving Northwest and West Central Ohio, one in Toledo, another in Lima. Some parts of Ohio do not have coverage for Lifeline calls and get routed out of state, resulting in longer wait times and fewer resource connections to local care. Over 15,400 calls made in Ohio were not able to be answered by a call center located in state in 2019.

In 2018, Congress passed the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act that tasked the FCC, in consultation with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the VA, with examining and reporting on the technical feasibility of designating a three-digit dialing code for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline. The FCC released its report in August 2019 recommending the designation of 9-8-8. In December of last year, the FCC started the process of designating 9-8-8 as a new, nationwide, 3-digit number for a suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline. The FCC's proposal is currently receiving public comment, and after review of comments the Commission will move toward final rules.

Congressman Latta is a proud co-sponsor of H.R. 4194, the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act, a bill that was introduced after the FCC released their report in August. This bipartisan bill falls in the jurisdiction of the Energy and Commerce Committee and requires the FCC to designate 9-8-8 as the universal telephone number for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline.

*Congressman Bob Latta (R-OH05) serves on the Energy and Commerce Committee as the Republican Leader on the Communications and Technology*

*Subcommittee where he advocates for policies that help consumers, grow the economy and spur innovation. He also serves as an active member of the Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee, which he previously chaired, and the Energy Subcommittee.*

*Congressman Latta has served on all six Energy and Commerce subcommittees. The Energy and Commerce Committee is the oldest standing legislative committee in the U.S. House of Representatives and is vested with the broadest jurisdiction of any congressional authorizing committee.*

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