

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



CHAIRMAN Special Committee on Aging

The Human-Services Emergency Logistics Program (HELP) Act

Why do we need the Human-Services Emergency Logistics Program Act?

In 2016, the Chief of Police of Dallas, Texas said, “We’re asking cops to do too much in this country...every societal failure...policing was never meant to solve all those problems.” In addition to their traditional responsibilities, law enforcement officers are now tasked with responding to calls about people who are experiencing homelessness, people experiencing mental health crises, and many other non-criminal emergencies. Subsequently, the number of people with disabilities experiencing violence and shootings when interacting with law enforcement is also increasing. *The Washington Post* database of police shootings estimates that at least 25 percent of shootings involve a person with a mental health disability. A 2016 Ruderman Foundation [report](#) estimated that between one-third and one-half of 2015 shootings involving a law enforcement officer included a person with a disability.

There are recent examples of police shootings of people with disabilities, such as Linden Cameron in Utah in September 2020, [Osaze Osagie](#) in State College, PA on March 20, 2019, and [Christian Hall](#) in Hamilton Township, PA on December 30, 2020. Many of these horrible outcomes could have been avoided by redirecting calls for assistance away from 9-1-1 and to human-services and mental health providers of 2-1-1 and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 9-8-8.

These alternative resource, response, and referral systems can reduce the burden placed on police. A comprehensive, reliable information and referral system and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline can reduce the wait time and more efficiently connect people with disabilities, older Americans, and people experiencing mental health crises and their families to the resources they need.

What will the HELP Act do?

The HELP Act will connect people in communities with the human-services and mental health resources they need while reducing the call and response burden on local and state law enforcement agencies. It would:

- Divert non-criminal, non-fire, and non-medical emergency calls from 9-1-1 systems to state and regional 2-1-1 and 9-8-8 systems.
- Provide each state with funds to build out its 2-1-1 and 9-8-8 referral systems to link callers to both emergency and long-term human-services and mental health resources in order to address their needs. Special emphasis would be placed on responses for mental health emergencies, homelessness needs, and other non-criminal emergencies.
 - In addition, the 2-1-1 system will serve as a robust resource and referral system capable of linking individuals and families to other human-services needs such as food assistance and child care.
- Create an oversight system for the 2-1-1 and 9-8-8 networks comprised of community members who represent older adults, people with disabilities, people of color, and members of other communities. Each system will be evaluated every year and recommendations to improve services will be made public.

Cosponsors: *Senator Moran, Senator Gillibrand, Senator Murkowski, Senator Murphy, Senator Merkley, Senator Sanders, Senator Kelly, Senator Menendez, Senator Blumenthal, Senator Hirono, Senator Booker, Senator Duckworth*