

# ASSEMBLY AGING AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO

### ASSEMBLY, No. 3016

# STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 17, 2025

The Assembly Aging and Human Services Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 3016.

This bill allows operators of the New Jersey Suicide Hopeline to place follow-up telephone calls to minors, 16 years of age or older who place calls to the hotline for counseling and support and who are identified as being at a high risk of committing suicide, without having to obtain the consent or authorization of the minor's parent.

Under current guidelines governing suicide hotlines established by the National Suicide Prevention Helpline, operators of such hotlines are prohibited from placing follow-up calls to minors who they identify as being at a high risk of committing suicide without the consent or authorization of the minor's parent.

The bill amends section 1 of P.L.1968, c.230 (C.9:17A-4) to stipulate that when a minor who is 16 years of age or older believes that he or she is in need of behavioral health care services for the treatment of mental illness or emotional disorders and places a call to the New Jersey Suicide Hopeline for counseling and support, the minor would be allowed to consent to receive a follow-up telephone call from the operator of the hotline who received and responded to the minor's original call without parental consent or authorization. The minor's consent would be valid and binding as if the minor were an adult.

Presently, minors can consent to certain types of temporary, outpatient, behavioral health, and substance use disorder treatment services. Current law does not allow minors to receive follow-up calls from the operators of suicide hotlines without parental consent.

The bill also amends section 1 of P.L.1968, c.230 (C.9:17A-4) to mandate that the minor's consent for receiving a follow-up telephone call from an operator of the New Jersey Suicide Hopeline would be considered confidential information between the operator and minor, and the minor or the operator would not be required to report the call to the minor's parent, if the call was the result of voluntary consent. The bill amends the law to also stipulate that a minor would not need the consent of anyone to receive a follow-up call from an operator of the hotline.

The New Jersey Suicide Hopeline is a Statewide suicide prevention hotline provided in partnership with Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care and the Division of Mental Health and

Addiction Services in the Department of Human Services. In 2018, the hotline received approximately 15,488 calls from youth under the age of 25. Research shows there is a significant benefit to follow-up telephone calls from operators of suicide hotlines to youth who are in crisis and at high risk for suicide. Allowing the operators of the New Jersey Suicide Hopeline to make follow-up calls to minors who are at a high risk to commit suicide would help in the prevention of youth suicide in the State.

This bill was prefiled for introduction in the 2024-2025 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.