

THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 1832
Author: Ransom (D), et al.
Amended: 8/13/26 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE EMERGENCY MGT. COMMITTEE: 9-0, 6/23/26

AYES: Stern, Seyarto, Allen, Ashby, Blakespear, Dahle, Grayson, Pérez, Rubio

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 8/13/26

AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 72-0, 5/21/26 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: 2-1-1 information and referral response system

SOURCE: 211 California
Family Resource Center San Joaquin
United Ways of California

DIGEST: This bill creates the 211 Fund in the State Treasury for the 211 system and related purposes, subject to appropriation by the Legislature, and directs the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to allocate the funds as specified.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Designates Cal OES as the lead state agency responsible for addressing natural, technological, or man-made disaster and emergencies, including activities necessary to prevent, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of emergencies and disasters to people and property.

- 2) Authorizes the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to supervise and regulate every public utility, including telephone companies, in the state and do all things necessary and convenient in the exercise of such power.

This bill:

- 1) Establishes the 211 Fund in the State Treasury, subject to legislative appropriation, and provides the moneys in the fund shall be used for the 211 system and related purposes.
- 2) Requires Cal OES to allocate the funds to the California 211 Providers Network, known as 211 California, to implement the activities specified in this bill.
- 3) Provides that the 211 Fund shall be used for the following purposes, as specified:
 - a) Enhancing critical 211 system capacity and service quality;
 - b) Providing equitable access to 211 dialing and services;
 - c) Publishing a statewide 211 community needs data dashboard;
 - d) Strengthening 211 community resource databases and enabling data sharing;
 - e) Promoting public awareness about 211; and,
 - f) Improving 211 system readiness, infrastructure, and capacity to respond to disasters and all hazard events.
- 4) Directs 211 California to provide an annual report to Cal OES on the status of the 211 system, use of any funds, and future 211 system funding needs.
- 5) Requires Cal OES to administer the 211 Fund solely for the purpose of allocating moneys appropriated from the Fund to 211 California and for receiving and reviewing the annual report required in 4) above.
- 6) Authorizes OES to recover up to \$100,000 per fiscal year for its reasonable administrative costs.

Background

What is 211? In 2000, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) designated 211 as the free telephone number to obtain information and referral (I&R) services

to various health and human services programs, such as physical and mental health resources, housing, utility, food and employment assistance. 211 also provides related preparedness, response, and recovery services during and after disasters and emergencies.

211 California. As described in its 2026-2028 Strategic Plan, 211 California is a statewide 501(c)3 nonprofit organization consisting of more than 20 local and regional 211 providers that deliver coverage to over 98% of California's population. According to 211 California, most 211 providers facilitate additional service navigation and care coordination that go beyond a referral. These services include accessing care services for the homeless, conducting benefits screening and enrollment for health and human services programs, recommending caregiver support programs, providing Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) safety planning for vulnerable households, arranging transportation and trip planning assistance, and collaborating with county and community partners to determine additional program eligibility. In 2025, 211 California providers responded to 1.8 million calls and texts. The most common requests involved housing assistance and food programs.

Statewide 211 coverage. As part of its action to reserve the 211 dialing code, the FCC encouraged states to implement 211 for access to I&R services. In response, the CPUC, under its authority to regulate telephone companies, issued an order in 2002 deploying the 211 system to counties and establishing administrative procedures for implementing 211 dialing in California. The CPUC further designated 211 California to serve as a single point of coordination and implementation in achieving statewide 211 coverage. An entity seeking to provide 211 services must apply to the CPUC for authority to use the 211 dialing code.

According to the CPUC, as of 2024, 45 of the state's 58 counties, covering approximately 99.3% of California's population, have 211 service. Of the 13 rural counties that do not have access to full 211, nine only offer disaster 211 service, meaning it is only activated and operational specifically in response to emergencies and disasters. The CPUC indicates it is working with various agencies and nonprofit organizations to extend 211 service to these remaining unserved areas.

211 and disaster response. 211 California reports that during major emergencies 211 providers often handle five to ten times the normal call volume. Due to the increasing role of 211 in disaster response, 211 California created 211Now (www.211Now.com), a dedicated online resource hub and emergency portal to support Californians during disasters, community distress incidents, PSPS events and other emergencies. The online platform supplies live information regarding

road closures, evacuation routes, shelters, food and medical assistance, and provides power outage support to electricity-dependent individuals with access and functional needs (AFN) in impacted communities. According to the Office of AFN within Cal OES, 211 is a trusted resource and essential community partner that provides important information and services to help individuals with AFN and their families stay informed, connected, safe and healthy.

Sustainability and funding challenges. Currently, the 211 system in California lacks a lead state agency to provide operational oversight and program sustainability. Prior legislative attempts to identify a state agency to administer 211 or establish a governance structure, via the California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHSA), the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), have not been successful.

The lack of a centralized state administrative entity for the 211 system also means 211 activities vary widely across the state. For example, according to 211 California's 2025 Annual Report, some counties partner with their respective 211 providers to deliver PSPS programming and support, while Los Angeles County partnered with its 211 affiliate, 211 LA, to report hate crimes under funding provided by the California Department of Civil Rights. 211 LA also served as a critical community resource for emergency response during the Los Angeles area wildfires in 2025.

Unlike the 911 emergency and 988 crisis response lines which have dedicated funding through telephone surcharges, 211 in California is funded through a fragmented mix of public and private sources, including charitable donations, grants, private foundations, local and state agencies for specific purposes, utility partnerships, and fee-for-service contracts. 211 California notes in its annual report that as more states contribute funding to support their 211 systems, California's lack of reliable public funding further exacerbates 211 service capacity and access inequities statewide.

This bill seeks to establish a structured arrangement between Cal OES and 211 California by directing Cal OES to administer moneys in a newly created 211 Fund to 211 California for the purposes described in the bill. The operation of the 211 Fund and its related purposes would be contingent on an appropriation by the Legislature.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- Unknown, ongoing General Fund cost pressures, likely in the tens of millions of dollars, to provide additional funding for 211 system enhancements. For context, the author's office has submitted a budget request for \$20 million in one-time funding; however, it is ultimately unknown at what level an appropriation for the bill might be made.
- While the bill specifies Cal OES administer the 2-1-1 Fund solely for the purpose of allocating moneys to 211 California, Cal OES may require additional resources to do so. The bill authorizes Cal OES to recover only up to \$100,000 per fiscal year to cover its administrative costs. To the extent that administrative costs rise above this threshold, there may be additional workload and cost pressures for Cal OES.
- Staff notes that even if Cal OES does not assume a significant administrative role, the office would still likely incur additional workload, with associated costs potentially in the hundreds of thousands to low millions of dollars, to create funding allocation criteria and evaluate reports for future fund distributions.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/14/26)

211 California (co-sponsor)

Family Resource Center San Joaquin (co-sponsor)

United Ways of California (co-sponsor)

211 LA

211 Sacramento

211 San Diego

AARP

American Medical Response

California 211 Providers Network

California Association of Food Banks

California Foundation for Independent Living Centers

Champions for Vibrant Health Leadership Network

Community Action Partnership of Kern

Community Link Capital Region

Contra Costa Crisis Center

Edison International

Emergency Food Bank of Stockton/San Joaquin

Inland Empire Health Plan Foundation

Inland Southern California United Way

Lift to Rise

Operation Dignity
 Orange County United Way
 San Joaquin County Office of Education
 Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County
 Self-Help Enterprises
 Sonoma County Community Organizations Active in Disaster
 Southern California Edison
 Supervisor Katrina Foley, Orange County Board of Supervisors, District 5
 Tracy Community Connections Center
 United Way Bay Area
 United Way of Merced County
 United Way of Northern California
 United Way of San Joaquin County
 United Way of Stanislaus County
 United Way of the Wine Country
 United Way of Tulare County
 United Way Santa Cruz County

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/14/26)

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: In support of this bill, the co-sponsors, 211 California, Family Resource Center San Joaquin and United Ways of California write that, “Simply put, our service organizations, counties, 9-1-1, and 9-8-8 need 2-1-1 to function so they can do their jobs and people can get the right kind of live help they need at the right time. This bill would support critical emergency management integration and ensure core operational capacity and infrastructure for the 2-1-1 system in California.”

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 72-0, 5/21/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Arambula, Chen, Garcia, Hoover, Lackey, Ramos,
Celeste Rodriguez, Wilson

Prepared by: Cassie Royce / E.M. /
8/17/26 10:42:53

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