

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Human Services
For HB 2473

Compiled on: Tuesday, March 28, 2023 3:39 PM

Note: Comments received by the committee reflect only the view of the individual(s) submitting the comment, who retain sole responsibility for the content of the comment. Neither the committee nor the Texas House of Representatives takes a position on the views expressed in any comment. The committee compiles the comments received for informational purposes only and does not exercise any editorial control over comments.

Hearing Date: March 28, 2023 8:00 AM

Brooke Freeland
United Way for Greater Austin
Austin, TX

Please vote in favor of HB 2473. 211 connects Texans in need to community-based resources 24/7, every day of the year. In addition to providing information and referral services, 211 Texas is the state's front door to a variety of services—including information and referrals to local and faith-based community services (Option 1), state benefits and eligibility, and disaster support.

Traci Jack, Senior Director, Public Policy & Philanthropic Initiatives
United Way Greater Houston
Houston, TX

The United Way of Greater Houston stands IN SUPPORT of HB 2473. For over 20 years, the United Way of Greater Houston has and continues to operate the state's largest 211 Helpline, serving 33 counties during the day and 70% of the state after hours and on weekends. In 2022 alone, the United Way of Greater Houston made over 1.2M connections. Statewide, call volume was up nearly 40% in 2020 and remains elevated over pre-pandemic levels.

The 211 Texas Helpline is a comprehensive connector to a variety of services, including information and referral services, state benefits and eligibility, and disaster support. These connections serve as a vital lifeline for the most vulnerable Texans, including connections to public benefits, basic needs, critical domestic violence and mental health resources, supports for veterans so much more.

We support House Bill 2473 by Rep. John Bucy because it would enhance 211's ability to be a front door, connector, navigator, and data resource for all communities. 211 Texas is behind other states in terms of efficiency, innovation, and system integration and is in need of critical technology and communications enhancements. This bill would deliver much-needed technology updates to the state's 2-1-1 call system, allowing Texas to maximize and leverage the system's functionalities and capabilities and better support Texans in need. These steps would support HHSC's non-medical drivers of health action plan by enhancing 211's resource database, communication capabilities, and outcomes tracking to address non-medical drivers of health and support specialized populations such as families with young children.

HB 2473 provides the legislature with a once in a lifetime opportunity to invest in the 211 network. Much needed technology improvements will allow the 211 network to incorporate texting, enhanced taxonomy and search functions for 211 Texas resource database, and two-way Application Programming Interface (API) for multidirectional communications and other measures required by national accreditation standards and designed to better connect specialized populations with available state and local services, including Texans impacted by disasters, pregnant women on Medicaid, veterans, and families with young children and address social determinants of health (SDOH).

We respectfully request the passage of HB 2473 that will allow the 211 network to incorporate technology improvements much needed over the past decade and ultimately allow the network to more efficiently serve Texans most in need.

Amanda McMillian
President & CEO
United Way of Greater Houston

Stephanie O'Banion
United Way of Central Texas
Temple, TX

Hi. My name is Stephanie O'Banion with the United Way of Central Texas, and I am submitting comments in support HB 2473 by Bucy and thank the committee for hearing this bill.

211 connects Texans in need to community-based resources 24/7, every day of the year.? In addition to providing information and referral services, 211 Texas is the state's front door to a variety of services—including information and referrals to local and faith-based community services (Option 1), state benefits and eligibility, and disaster support. 211 in our 7 county region allows us to not only connect individuals to valuable resources, but also allows community stakeholders access to real time data surrounding community issues where solutions can be collectively developed.

Unfortunately, 211 Texas is behind other states and needs critical technology and communication enhancements to ensure this critical state resource is efficiently and effectively meeting the needs of all Texans. For example, the 211 Texas website is not user-friendly and often requires very specific search terms to be entered for certain resources to appear. Additionally, 211 currently does not offer texting, meaning that any information callers receive from Community I&R Specialists must be written down using pen and paper.

HB 2473 will strengthen 211's ability to serve as data resource, community connector, and tool that can help improve the health and wellbeing of all Texans. This bill activates technological capabilities that would allow 211 regional call centers to better address local needs. By investing in and fully leveraging this system, leaders can provide vital support and resources to those in need, decrease the burden on Texans to connect to help, and support community organizations that are contributing to better outcomes for all Texans.

On behalf of our community, we thank Rep. Bucy for championing this issue, and ask the committee to vote HB 2473 out as soon as possible.

Chris Martin, President & CEO
United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County
San Antonio, TX

I, Chris Martin, I, Chris Martin, support HB 2473 by Bucy and thank the committee for hearing this bill today.

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In our community, 211 is operated by United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County and is available 24/7/365. This bill includes enhancements that align with the roles we play in our community as convenors, connectors, and provider of resources, by increasing 211's ability to integrate with our community partners to better meet local needs.

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This bill would deliver much-needed technology updates to the state's 2-1-1 call system, allowing Texas to maximize and leverage the system's functionalities and capabilities and better support Texans in need. These steps would also support HHSC's non-medical drivers of health action plan by enhancing 211's resource database, communication capabilities, and outcomes tracking to address the needs of specialized populations such as families with young children.

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