

The Calling for 2-1-1 Act
Sample Letter to Representatives

DATE

The Honorable [FULL NAME]
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative [LAST NAME]:

Please cosponsor *The Calling for 2-1-1 Act* (HR 896), introduced by Representatives Mike Bilirakis (R-FL-9) and Anna Eshoo (D-CA-14). The legislation would authorize \$150 million in federal funding to bring 2-1-1 to the nation.

2-1-1, an easy to remember telephone number that connects people with important community services and volunteer opportunities, is a cost-effective answer to help people navigate the complex and ever-growing maze of human service agencies and programs. Where 2-1-1 is operational, people can cut through red tape to gain access to a full range of community resources. By making these services easier to access, 2-1-1 encourages prevention and fosters self-sufficiency and civic engagement. It's efficient, fast, and easy. 2-1-1 can further be used as a community planning tool. Based on aggregate data about the types of calls a 2-1-1 Center receives, communities are in a better position to anticipate demand for services and mobilize resources to meet changing needs.

In July 2000, the Federal Communications Commission assigned the three-digit dialing code 2-1-1 to be used exclusively for community information and referral purposes. This service is only available to 37 percent of the population with call centers operating in 31 states and the District of Columbia. 2-1-1 remains perhaps the best-kept secret in essential community services, even though the FCC in 2000 endorsed taking 2-1-1 national and despite the ever growing demand for 2-1-1 as an asset for homeland security and disaster recovery needs. Despite this demonstrated need for 2-1-1, limited resources remains the key barrier to sustainability and nationwide implementation.

The Triangle is currently served by a 2-1-1 system. Thousands of callers each year are finding help, hope and services as a result of the caring service provided by our 2-1-1 service. Triangle United Way now also has the ability to monitor community needs and respond to changes as they occur. I believe everyone should have access to this valuable service.

A fully realized nationwide 2-1-1 system will not happen without the support of the federal government, in partnership with states, as provided by *The Calling for 2-1-1 Act*. Current funding where 2-1-1 is operational comes from diverse sources including non-profits, state and local governments, foundations, and businesses. The dedicated federal funding stream to build and sustain 2-1-1 provided in this legislation will help to foster the public-private partnership necessary to make 2-1-1 available to 100 percent of the population.

A recent cost-benefit analysis conducted by the University of Texas at Austin found that over ten years, a nationwide 2-1-1 system would save the nation upwards of \$1.1 billion in saved time, volunteer recruitment, tax assistance and recovery, unnecessary 1-800 hotlines, and a reduction in non-emergency calls to 9-1-1.

Please cosponsor *The Calling for 2-1-1 Act* (HR 896) and support our efforts to bring this valuable service to the nation.

Sincerely,