



May 24, 2023

SENATE FLOOR ALERT
SB 318 (Ochoa Bogh): 211 Information and Referral Network.
As Introduced February 6, 2023 – SUPPORT
Senate Third Reading File

The California State Association of Counties (CSAC), the Urban Counties of California (UCC), and the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) are pleased to support Senate Bill 318. This measure would establish the 211 Support Services Grant Program, which would support, scale, and innovate 211 services across California.

211 is a free information and referral gateway to access information on critical local health, human services, and economic supports. Working with non-profits and local public agencies throughout the state, 211 not only provides accurate information but can identify emerging needs as Californians struggle to stay economically secure. 211, which is funded with a patchwork of local resources, also relieves pressure on the critical 911 emergency systems by providing access to non-emergency help during times of health emergencies and natural disasters.

In recent years, 211 systems have experienced a significant increase in demand. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Newsom and other public officials encouraged the public to use 211 services to access critical information and assistance because it is the only statewide trusted, easy to access, multilingual, 24/7 live information and referral service. In addition, the growing number of wildfires and other natural disasters in recent years have also increased the number of calls to 211 call centers. While emergency and other COVID funding is coming to an end, Californians are still contacting 211 at near peak pandemic levels due to the housing and homelessness crises and weather emergencies.

Additional state support is needed to help 211 service providers meet the continued high demand for 211 assistance. It is critical for the state to support safety net services to meet the needs of vulnerable communities. SB 318 would strengthen and enhance 211 services by:

- Supporting core 211 operations, capacity, and community engagement
- Innovating resource and community needs data sharing to health and government partners; and,
- Ensuring 211 availability across rural counties for disasters and full 211 service operability.

For the reasons outlined above, CSAC, UCC, and RCRC are pleased to support SB 318 and respectfully request your AYE vote. Should you or your staff have additional questions about our position, please do not hesitate to reach out to Justin Garrett, CSAC Legislative Advocate at jgarrett@counties.org, Kelly Brooks-Lindsey, UCC Legislative Advocate at kbl@hbeadvocacy.com and Sarah Dukett, RCRC Legislative Advocate at sdukett@rcrcnet.org.

cc: Joe Parra, Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus