



April 11, 2023

Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil, Chair
Senate Human Services Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 7240
Sacramento CA 95814

**Re: Senate Bill 318 (Ochoa Bogh) – 211 information and referral network
As Introduced February 6, 2023 – SUPPORT
Set for Hearing on April 17, 2023 – Senate Human Services Committee**

Dear Senator Alvarado-Gil,

On behalf of the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), the Urban Counties of California (UCC) and the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), we write in support of SB 318 authored by Senator Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh. This legislation 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.

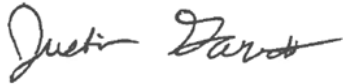
In recent years, 211 systems have experienced a significant increase in demand. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, Governor Newsom and other public officials encouraged the public to use 211 services to access critical information and assistance such as emergency rental assistance, vaccine and testing appointments, home food delivery for seniors, and more – because it is the only statewide trusted, easy to access, multilingual, 24/7 live information and referral service. In addition, there have been an increasing number of wildfires and other natural disasters in our state in recent years that have also increased the number of calls to 211 call centers. In 2021, California's 211 providers answered over 2 million calls, averaging over 11,000 inquiries from Californians in need every single day of the year. 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 these reasons, CSAC, UCC, and RCRC are pleased to support SB 318, and respectfully request your “Aye” vote on this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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cc: The Honorable Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh, Member, California State Senate
Honorable Members and Consultants, Senate Human Services Committee