

Date of Hearing: April 24, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS AND CONVEYANCE

Tasha Boerner, Chair

AB 3020 (Reyes) – As Amended April 15, 2024

SUBJECT: 2-1-1 Infrastructure Act

SUMMARY: This bill would require the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to establish and convene the 2-1-1 Strategic Advisory Committee, as specified.

Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) States findings and declarations of the Legislature regarding 2-1-1.
- 2) Requires the Office of Planning and Research to establish and convene the 2-1-1 Strategic Council under the Office of Community Partnerships and Strategic Communications.
- 3) Specifies that council members will reflect California’s diverse geography and populations, and be composed of at least 14 specified members including:
 - a. The Directors of various state agencies.
 - b. A representative of the statewide 2-1-1 coordinating entity.
 - c. At least three representatives from community based organizations.
 - d. A member of the public with lived experience utilizing 2-1-1 service.
 - e. At least two city or county officials with knowledge or experience with local 2-1-1 programs and services.
- 4) Assigns duties to the council, as specified, including:
 - a. Identify and review the activities and funding programs of member state agencies that may be coordinated with to improve access to state services and programs and maximize 2-1-1 infrastructure, especially related to populating experiencing housing insecurity.
 - b. Identify and establish an ongoing funding source for statewide 2-1-1 infrastructure and operations.
 - c. Recommend policies and priorities to the Governor, the Legislature, and to appropriate state agencies to encourage the development of California’s 2-1-1 infrastructure to promote equity, strengthen wildfire resilience, and increase public health and safety.
- 5) Requires that the council’s meetings shall be open to the public and subject to the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act.
- 6) Specifies that this bill shall be implemented only to the extent that funds are appropriated for this purpose in the annual Budget Act or another statute, or are made available for this purpose from federal sources

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Provides that the CPUC may supervise and regulate every public utility in the State and may do all things that are “necessary and convenient” in the supervision and regulation of public utilities. (Public Utilities Code § 701)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. This bill has been keyed fiscal by the Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

- 1) *Author’s Statement.* According to the author: “AB 3020 aims to foster a collaborative environment between 211 providers and state agencies in order to improve community support and resource accessibility throughout California. By establishing the state's inaugural 211 Advisory Council under the Office of Planning and Research, this bill lays the groundwork for long-term cohesion, ensuring that vital services reach those in need efficiently and effectively. The 211 service is a vital resource connecting individuals with essential community services and resources and serves as a centralized hub where people can seek assistance with various needs, including health, housing and other human services. This act reflects our commitment to strengthening the network of support available to Californians statewide and plays a critical role in enhancing community well-being by ensuring that individuals have access to the support they require, particularly during times of crisis or uncertainty. AB 3020 would strengthen this invaluable resource by fostering collaboration between 211 providers and state entities, ultimately improving the accessibility and effectiveness of services statewide.”
- 2) *What is 2-1-1?* 2-1-1 is a free telephone number providing access to local community services. The number connects callers to information and services, including referrals to physical and mental health resources; housing, utility, food, and employment assistance; and suicide and crisis interventions. 2-1-1 also provides disaster preparedness, response, and recovery during declared emergencies.

2-1-1 was first established in 2000 following a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) order, which reserved the 2-1-1 dialing code for providing non-emergency community information and referral (I&R) services. The FCC’s order¹ recognized and encouraged the states to implement 2-1-1 dialing for access to I&R services. In response, the CPUC issued a decision² implementing 2-1-1 in California. To provide 2-1-1 service, providers and entities first apply to the CPUC for authority to provide these services. Under the decision, 2-1-1 services are operated by county-based entities that coordinate with local human services agencies and by providers who connect callers to local community services. Each individual service provider is responsible for establishing and maintaining a database of community service programs and agencies for the county or counties it serves and updates the database at least once annually.

¹ Federal Communications Commission. (2000). *Third Report and Order and Order on Reconsideration (FCC 00-256 / FCC 00-257*

² California Public Utilities Commission. (2003). *Decision D0302029 Decision Establishing Policies and Procedures for Implementing 2-1-1 Dialing in California.*

- 3) *2-1-1 Funding Challenges.* According to the CPUC, 6 counties, representing approximately 0.5% of California's population, still lack 2-1-1 service. Under SB 1212 (Hueso, Chapter 841, Statutes of 2016) the CPUC was authorized until January 1, 2023, to expend up to \$1,500,000 from the California Teleconnect Fund Administrative Committee Fund to help close 2-1-1 service gaps in counties lacking access to disaster preparedness, response, and recovery information and referral services, where technically feasible, through available 2-1-1 service. However, that authority has since expired although the problem with certain counties lacking service still persists. As a result, without dedicated funding or further action, 211 access may be even further restricted or eliminated in 17 rural counties³ that currently only operate in the event of disasters. These counties and their roughly 500,000 residents are increasingly vulnerable to natural disasters, such as wildfires, mudslides and floods, creating a greater need for expanded 211 services.

Given the issue with inequitable deployment of 2-1-1 services across the state, this bill proposes to convene a committee that would create a statewide committee that could tackle the problem. Through joint collaboration between the state and 2-1-1 providers, the committee has the potential to create a more equitable alignment among providers across the state, in order to create a statewide health and human services navigation network, disaster preparedness, response, and recovery system, and to facilitate the reach of local services to vulnerable populations. However, all of this work will depend on funding to convene the committee and fund the programs at the county level.

- 4) *The duties of this commission would benefit from more detail.* This bill would assign particular duties to the committee, including: identifying and establishing an ongoing funding source for statewide 2-1-1 infrastructure and operations; recommending policies and priorities to the Governor and Legislature; establishing a 2-1-1 portal to showcase emerging data trends; and serving as the coordinating body for any federal 2-1-1 investments or initiatives. While this bill assigns a breadth of duties to this agency, this bill does not provide any guidance on timing or even specify how often the committee should meet. Additionally, it is unclear how a committee would have the authority to establish an ongoing funding source for 2-1-1 unless that authority was specified in this bill, which it is not. Nonetheless, there are potentially federal funds that could be available for the purposes outlined in this bill⁴. Moving forward, the author may wish to consider providing more detail to these provisions of this bill to ensure the committee will achieve its objectives.

5) Related/similar legislation.

- a. SB 319 (Ochoa-Bough) of 2023 would have required, upon appropriation, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to develop and administer the 2-1-1 Support Services Grant Program to stabilize, support, and expand 2-1-1 service to all areas of California. The bill was held in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

³ The 17 counties include: Alpine, Colusa, Lake, Calaveras, Del Norte, El Dorado, Inyo, Lassen, Modoc, Mono, Amador, Trinity, Sutter, Plumas, Sierra, Tuolumne, and Yuba

⁴ In 2024 the bipartisan Human-Services Emergency & Logistic Program (HELP) Act was introduced under HB 3498 and S.1729. If enacted, the bills would financially support both 211 and 988, including authorizing \$350M in investments for the 211 network for two years and an additional \$300M for 211 for four years after that. However, neither bill has been approved.

- b. SB 74 (Mitchell), Chapter 6, Statutes of 2020, & AB 74 (Ting), Chapter 23, Statutes of 2019, appropriated \$1.5 million for encumbrance or expenditure until June 30, 2024, for payment of claims related to expanding 2-1-1 services to unserved and underserved areas, and appropriated \$1.5 million for liquidation of encumbrances until June 30, 2026, related to expanding 2-1-1 services to unserved and underserved areas.
- c. SB 1212 (Hueso), Chapter 841, Statutes of 2016, authorized the CPUC to expend up to \$1.5 million from the California Teleconnect Fund (CTF) Administrative Committee to help close telephone service gaps in counties lacking access to 2-1-1 referral service, including implementation of a coordinated publicly owned database.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

211 California
211 LA County
Community Action Partnership of Kern
Contra Costa Crisis Center
County of Santa Clara
Eden I&r, INC.
Family Resource & Referral Center
Info Line of San Diego County
Inland Southern California United Way
Jewish Family Service of The Desert
Proteus, INC.
Reach Out
Second Harvest of Silicon Valley
St. Joseph's Family Center
United Way Fresno Madera Counties
United Way Monterey County
United Way of Merced County
United Way of Stanislaus County
United Way of Ventura County
United Ways of California

Opposition

None on file.

Analysis Prepared by: Emilio Perez / C. & C. / (916) 319-2637