

Date of Hearing: April 15, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS AND CONVEYANCE

Tasha Boerner, Chair

AB 1832 (Ransom) – As Amended March 19, 2026

SUBJECT: 2-1-1 information and referral response system

SUMMARY: Requires the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to convene state emergency planning agencies for coordination purposes related to 2-1-1, and to integrate 2-1-1 into the state emergency planning and communications processes.

Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the CPUC to establish communication channels between state emergency planning agencies, the 2-1-1 lead entity, and 2-1-1 providers, including adding 2-1-1 to emergency notification and coordination channels.
- 2) Requires the CPUC to integrate 2-1-1 into the state emergency planning and emergency communications processes.
- 3) Requires the 2-1-1 lead entity to take actions, as specified.
- 4) Requires the CPUC to convene relevant state agencies, utilities, advocates, and persons involved in the 2-1-1 system to evaluate current utility financial assistance, savings, and discount program awareness, referral practices and outcomes, and to explore how to more efficiently connect eligible households to utility-related financial assistance, savings, and discount programs through 2-1-1.
- 5) Establishes within the State Treasury the 2-1-1 Fund, the moneys in which shall be used for purposes of implementing this bill.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Authorizes the CPUC to 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)
- 2) Vests the Legislature with plenary power to confer additional authority and jurisdiction upon the CPUC. (Article XII Section 5 of the California Constitution)
- 3) Vests the Office of Emergency Services with the responsibility for the state’s emergency and disaster response services for natural, technological, or man-made disasters and emergencies, including responsibility for activities necessary to prevent, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of emergencies and disasters to people and property. (Government Code § 8585)

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

COMMENTS:

- 1) *Author's statement.* According to the author “211 is a reliable alternative to 911 for Californians facing a crisis, a disaster, or needing access to basic needs. For families across California, 211 is a lifeline, and with the increase in large-scale natural disasters and emergency events, the need for a reliable 211 continues to grow. AB 1832 would ensure 211 has the support and visibility it needs to strengthen this statewide network and enable more people to get help quickly, especially after emergencies. In doing so, 211 service providers can relieve pressure on 911 and emergency response teams, creating a more coordinated and efficient disaster response system.”
- 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. However, unlike the 9-1-1 or 9-8-8 system there is no dedicated state funding support for the system, nor a statutory structure for the system should operate.

2-1-1 was first established in the early 2000's 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 order recognized and encouraged the states to implement 2-1-1 dialing for access to I&R services. In response and under its own authority, not legislative direction, the CPUC adopted a decision 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.

- 3) *The 2-1-1 lacks statewide coordination, support and focus.* The 2-1-1 system in California does not have any specific statutes governing its operations, nor any statutorily mandated functions or goals. Across the state the 2-1-1 is not well coordinated with state agencies or funding sources and instead manages its operations through local funding from counties and grants. The lack of a centralized state administration structure for the 2-1-1 system means its availability throughout the state is unequal, with 15 counties currently being unserved by 2-1-1 service.

In the counties where 2-1-1 does operate, the system does make millions of contacts per year and serves a variety of informational functions related to social services, public safety, healthcare, utility assistance, and other support services. In other words, the 2-1-1 system operates as a catch-all system for public resources, but this also means the system's operations across the state lacks focus. Therefore, it has had limited usefulness to statewide initiatives. For example, in some counties the 2-1-1 system has worked on public information campaigns related to public-safety power shutoffs. In Los Angeles County, the system was used to report hate crimes under funding received from the California Department of Civil Rights. The system was also widely utilized as an emergency response tool during the Los Angeles area wildfires in 2025. In the same year, the 2-1-1 system 14.2% of 2-1-1 calls were abandoned or dropped.

Given that 2-1-1 is not currently integrated into statewide initiatives or coordinated with state agency, this bill proposes to fill that gap by appointing the CPUC to convene statewide planning agencies to integrate the 2-1-1 system into state emergency planning and communications processes. This bill also includes a provision that would require the CPUC to undertake work related to current utility financial assistance and to explore how to more efficiently connect eligible households to utility-related financial assistance through 2-1-1. Although that work may be valuable for utility customers, it does not seem aligned with the other provisions of this bill related to emergency response. Instead, this provision would further exacerbate the criticism that the 2-1-1 system lacks focus.

- 4) *Which state entity should be responsible for 2-1-1 operations, if any?* While the 2-1-1 system currently serves many purposes, this bill would formalize the system's operation as a tool for emergency response; however, this bill proposes to assign those duties to the CPUC. Although the CPUC did establish the 2-1-1 number, the CPUC otherwise has a limited scope of work related to implementation of 2-1-1. For example, the CPUC is not the state's lead agency for emergency response, nor does it have a direct hand in operating the other 3-digit emergency response numbers like 9-1-1 or 9-8-8. The CPUC is traditionally a regulatory agency for telecommunications, whose primary function is to regulate the terms and conditions of telecommunications service. While some of their work touches on emergency response, it has not traditionally been a core function. Particularly at a time when this committee has advanced legislation to reduce the scope of work for the CPUC, by adding new responsibilities to the CPUC this bill would be a departure from recent policy direction.

Nonetheless, there are reasonable alternatives that may be more aligned with the author's intent. For example, the Office of Emergency Services already has statutory duties related to emergency response, and primary responsibilities for administration of the 9-1-1 and 9-8-8 systems. The author may wish to amend this bill to instead require the OES to implement the provisions of this bill.

5) Recent/related legislation.

- a. AB 3020 (Reyes) of 2024 would have required the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to establish and convene the 2-1-1 Strategic Advisory Committee. The bill was held in Assembly Appropriations Committee.
- b. SB 318 (Ochoa Bogh) of 2023 would have required 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.

6) Committee amendments.

- a. Instead of the CPUC, require the Office of Emergency Services to implement this bill.
- b. Strike the requirement for the CPUC to convene relevant state agencies, utilities, advocates, and persons involved in the 2-1-1 system to evaluate current utility financial assistance, savings, and discount program awareness, referral practices and outcomes, and to explore how to more efficiently connect eligible households to utility-related financial assistance, savings, and discount programs through 2-1-1.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

211 California
211 LA County
American Medical Response West
Community Action Partnership of Kern
Community Link Capitol Region
Contra Costa Crisis Center
Emergency Food Bank of Stockton/san Joaquin
Family Resource and Referral Center of San Joaquin
Info Line of San Diego DbA 211 San Diego
Inland Southern California United Way
Lift to Rise
Orange County United Way
San Joaquin County Office of Education
Self-help Enterprises
Supervisor Katrina Foley, Orange County Board of Supervisors - District 5
Tracy Community Connections Center
United Way Bay Area
United Way of Merced County
United Way of San Joaquin County
United Way of Stanislaus County
United Way of Tulare County
United Way Santa Cruz County
United Ways of California (UWCA)

Opposition

None on file.

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