



Preventing Substance Abuse & Suicide

Testimony for Public Hearing
House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Services
March 7, 2019

Chair Evans, Vice-Chairs Rick Lewis and Mark Meek, and Members of the Committee:

I urge you to support and pass HB 2650, funding for 211info to serve Oregonians with a 24/7 contact center and accelerate its impact with regionally based Community Engagement Coordinators.

The requested funding—\$3.2 million for the biennium—would give everyone access to highly trained 211info specialists via phone, text and email at all hours, every day of the year. This bill meets the needs of working families who can't access information during traditional business hours and strengthens communities by providing details on a wide range of resources.

This investment in 211info creates a sustainable, reliable partner in disaster response. 211info is a critical support to emergency services during wildfires, severe weather, floods, industrial accidents and other disaster. During disease outbreaks such as measles, pertussis and meningitis, 211info supports public health response by answering questions and providing referrals for consumers via phone call, text, email, mobile app, online database and a robust social media platform.

Locally based community engagement coordinators build trust and relationships in rural and underserved areas, creating a stronger resource database and facilitating cross-sector collaborations.

Currently, more than a third of 211info's contacts are turned away because they dial 211 outside its business hours of 8am-6pm weekdays. Expanded service hours will better serve the state contractors who need 24/7 service for their constituents, enable closer alignment with 911, mental health and domestic violence supports, and provide a framework for coordinated entry programs and other innovations. 211info will leverage the additional service hours through more comprehensive data analytics, which provide trends reporting, demographic data and needs identification.

Lines for Life values our partnership with 211info and strongly supports extending 211info's service hours to benefit residents of our communities. We urge you to fully fund 211info's funding request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Westbrook".

David Westbrook, COO

Lines for Life