

JANEEN SOLLMAN
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 30



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

3/7/19

RE: HB 2650 | Appropriates moneys to Oregon Military Department to expand and increase access to statewide 211 system.

Dear Chair Evans and Members of the Veterans and Emergency Preparedness Committee,

I am writing in support of HB 2650 which aims to expand and increase access to the 211 system. I support this bill because of the impacts it has in our communities and the potential it has when services are expanded. Callers can dial in, visit the website, email or text to seek information.

During a visit to the 211 Center, I was able to listen in on some calls and gained a new perspective on the impact this call line makes to Oregonians. Callers had a variety of needs from access to immediate resources such as food and shelter, to longer term needs such as dental care, rent and rental deposit assistance, and housing location assistance. On one of the calls I heard, a man experiencing housing insecurity called the 211 info line with a question about a job he recently secured. This man got a job but needed black dress shoes and a food handlers card to begin working, neither of which he had access to. The 211 info line was able to connect this man with a place he could get a pair of free black dress shoes, as well as a food handlers card. The caller was able to begin his job prepared because of the help he received from 211. Imagine the difference that a pair of shoes and a food handlers card made in this one man's life. It seems simple, but without 211 the caller may have remained unemployed.

Most of us have no idea what struggles people go through in their daily lives. One testimony that speaks to the effectiveness of 211 comes from a single father who was injured while at work. He called the help line seeking rent assistance for a month until he was able to attain short term disability pay or receive his doctor's approval to go back to work. 211 was able to help this father with rent assistance, helping him through this difficult time. There are many more instances of 211 info working to help people back on their feet.

The reality is, 211 info is a valuable resource for Oregonians who are struggling. Most callers report an income at or below the federal poverty level. Since July 2018, there have been 12,621 contacts in Washington County alone made to 211, a majority of these being phone calls. The impact of 211 is clear in Washington County.

I urge the passage of HB 2650 to help expand the benefits of 211 info across Oregon.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Janeen Sollman".

Janeen Sollman
State Representative
House District 30