



March 7, 2019

House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Services
The Honorable Chair Paul Evans
Vice-Chairs Rick Lewis and Mark Meek

Chair Evans 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.

211info may be best known as a resource for human services, but its utility is much broader. Oregonians for Food and Shelter worked with 211info and the Oregon Department of Agriculture to set up a hotline at 211 for the public to both report and get information about pesticide use in their communities. This public information service has helped ease concerns and smooth relations between community members and pesticide applicators.

We urge you to support an investment in 211info to ensure that this important public information tool remains available to help serve Oregonians with a wide variety of important information that would otherwise be difficult to find.

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.

Oregonians for Food and Shelter 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.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Katie Fast
Executive Director
Oregonians for Food and Shelter