



YOUR VOICE HAS POWER - PLEASE USE IT TO PUT 2-1-1 BACK IN THE NYS BUDGET

YOU can make a difference in 2-1-1's future today - and therefore millions of New York State residents - by advocating with us to get 2-1-1 back in the budget. Despite the many good business, humanitarian and disaster-related reasons why United Way's 2-1-1 can measurably help New York State, Governor Paterson did not include 2-1-1 in his budget.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- 1) Please show your concern by clicking on the link to send a letter via e-mail. The letter is asking the Governor to reconsider his decision not to fund 2-1-1 in New York State.
- 2) If you would be so kind as to send a hard copy version as well (see below), *it will also be counted*. Letters should be received at the very latest by February 9th.
- 3) Please send the link to all your friends, family and colleagues who may be willing to help out so that we can show the Governor how important 2-1-1 is for residents in our area - **especially** in this economy!

Thanks in advance for LIVING UNITED by clicking below to send the e-mail:

<http://www.capwiz.com/uwnys/issues/alert/?alertid=14607571&type=SW>

According to Susan Hager, President of UWNYS, "**While CapWiz (the email link above) will generate email volume we also need hard copy volume if we are going to have an impact, especially in the current environment with so many groups in the budget fray.**

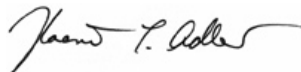
ADVOCACY WORKS!

Susan Hager also advises: "Going forward, as we seek to influence the Legislature, we will be suggesting that you consider other steps:

- Letters to the editor or a feature column about one or more budget issues your United Way is most concerned about.
- Meetings with your state legislators to request that they support United Way's budget priorities.
- Plan to join UWNYS in Albany on March 22nd for advocacy and a reception at the state capitol. More on this event to come.

UWNYS is planning to testify at the joint Senate-Assembly Human Services Budget Hearing on February 10 in Albany. As usual, we will send you a copy of our testimony."

As always, thank you for all you are doing for United Way and 211!
Naomi



Naomi L. Adler, Esq.
President and Chief Executive Officer

For a hard copy letter, please copy and paste the following to a Word document, adding your own name and information.

Date

Re: \$4.4 million for 2-1-1 in budget proposal

Honorable David M. Paterson, Governor
State Capitol
Executive Chamber
Albany, New York 12247

Dear Governor Paterson

In the 10 years we have been advocating for state support for 2-1-1, we have heard a consistent refrain from the Governor's Office and Division of the Budget: document the need for the service and tell us how to pay for it. Both responses are now clear.

The need is documented by many indicators including:

- The 2.78 million referrals by 2-1-1 call centers in 2009 compared with 1.8 million in all of 2008.
- The staggering jump in food stamp recipients, a 12% increase between January and August of 2009 alone to reach a high of 2.5 million.
- Significant increases in participation in the school breakfast (12.5% increase) and summer food program for children (an 8.4% increase), and
- The jump in recipients of the Home Energy Assistance Program or HEAP, 33% between 2006 and 2009, reaching a high of 1.52 million.

The need for an easily remembered, multi-lingual number is clear. People who never needed help before are looking to 2-1-1 for assistance.

For several years we have recommended that the state review its multiple 800#s and consider consolidation as a way to save on three distinct but related costs:

- Multiple state hotlines telecommunications needs.
- Developing and maintaining single issue databases, and
- Promoting many different 800 numbers to the public, each to provide service for a single issue.

In mid 2009 your office undertook a comprehensive review of these 800#s. We are gratified that you are now recommending consolidation of 350 state hotlines; however we are deeply disappointed that none of the savings from this work will be shared with the 2-1-1 system that brought the idea to your attention.

Your consolidation proposals summarize a plan to create a centralized management structure and knowledge repository for state call centers needs. This is exactly the model that 2-1-1 already has in place, developed with state and local government, United Way and other private funding.

There is no other organization or agency that provides the same comprehensive information and referral service that 2-1-1 does.

We do not understand the relative cost benefit of a plan that would cast aside the state's 3-year investment of over \$13 million in 2-1-1, in favor of creating a redundant state operated system to improve customer service. 2-1-1 already assures the highest standards of customer service as articulated by national AIRS requirements for information and referral and 2-1-1 New York's own, stringent guidelines.

While you are working to develop the details in order to implement your consolidation plan, what agency or organization is going to provide the help that is needed now, by so many New Yorkers at the scale that 2-1-1 already has in place?

Instead, we urge you to invest \$4.4 million in order to save the state money while meeting four significant deliverables:

- Support 2-1-1's six operating call centers which already serve over 93% of the state's population.
- Provide access to 2-1-1 databases on the web, 24/7 as well as via the phone.
- Provide 2-1-1 service to those counties not yet served.
- Partner with state agencies on outreach, information, referrals, public benefits screening, assistance with disaster relief and response - all issues they have discussed with 2-1-1.

This investment will result in statewide 2-1-1 service, on a year round basis, 24/7, as well as continue the value add of language translation service to support New York's diverse population.

The role of 2-1-1 in response to New York's ever-present emergencies, from the flooding in the Southern Tier, Hudson Valley and Western New York, the Clarence plane crash, the hepatitis B scare in Erie County, to providing information on flu shots in conjunction with county health departments, is yet another distinction this state investment would continue to support. 2-1-1 is part of a national system whose call centers can and do back each other up in a significant emergency with the flip of a switch.

State governments including Connecticut, Texas, Oregon, Maryland, Vermont, Florida, New Jersey, and others, now utilize 2-1-1 as the first point of entry for delivering information and referral across a long list of service needs as well as referring callers to government and not for profit agencies.

In supplying information to your staff's review of 800# we also demonstrated the many ways that 2-1-1:

- Saves state and local governments money.
- Relieves 911 of non emergency calls that they may be unprepared to handle during a true disaster.
- Is an effective mechanism to link and in some cases pre-screen people for public benefits such as the free tax preparation at VITA sites.
- Can be used creatively to support a wide variety of outreach efforts, most recently as a pilot in four regions to increase the number of employed persons with a disability who are employed and eligible for the Medicaid Buy-In - significant savings to state and local governments.

We urge you to amend your budget proposal to include a state investment of \$4.4 million for 2-1-1; clearly the most cost effective and logical way to provide strong customer service to New Yorkers who need information or help.

Sincerely,

Send copies to:

Robert A. Megna, Director, Division of the Budget
Executive Chamber, State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Kristin Proud, Deputy Secretary for Human Services, Operations and Oversight.
Executive Chamber, State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Todd Scheuermann, Chief Budget Examiner, Division of the Budget
Executive Chamber, State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Valerie Grey, Director of State Operations
Executive Chamber, State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224