



AB 1832 Testimony - Senate Emergency Management Committee

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6/23/26

Good afternoon Chair Stern and Members. My name is Alana Hitchcock, and I am the CEO of 211 California.

When we think about California's emergency response system, we immediately think of 911. Increasingly, we also think of 988.

But between 911 and 988 stands another critical lifeline that millions of Californians rely on every year: 211.

Together, these three systems form a delicate ecosystem and support network for Californians, with 211, connecting people to the information, resources, and services that keep a crisis from becoming an emergency.

Many of the 1.8 million calls every year are not just requests for information. They are moments of crisis intervention. A senior facing eviction, or trying to stay safe during extreme heat. A mother unable to feed her children. People struggling to access healthcare or behavioral health services. They are opportunities to prevent a call to 911, a visit to the emergency room, or often, a deeper behavioral health crisis.

That role becomes even more critical during disasters, as you will hear from our other witness.

Whether it is the ongoing Boyle Heights warehouse fire, where 211 is connecting people to life saving air purifiers and emergency housing, wildfires, Public Safety Power Shutoffs, floods, extreme heat events, or future disasters, Californians need more than alerts. They need a trusted human being who can help them understand what those alerts mean for their family, their neighborhood, and their specific circumstances.

For seniors, people with disabilities, families with limited English proficiency, and those without reliable internet access, 211 is often the bridge to help people understand when they need to pack up and evacuate or stay put.



That is why this moment is so urgent.

Today, more than one-third of California's 211 capacity is at risk of closure or severe service reductions within the next year due to funding shortfalls. If we allow that capacity to disappear, we are not simply losing 211 call centers. We are weakening the entire emergency response ecosystem that Californians depend on.

AB 1832 and our \$20m budget request recognize that reality, and create a path toward 211 system stability and improving coordination within the emergency management framework at CalOES.

We respectfully ask for your "Aye" vote on AB 1832.

Thank you.