

## **AB 1832 Support Testimony – Alma Bowen, Founder/Executive Director, Nuestra Comunidad**

Good afternoon Chair and Members.

My name is Alma Bowen, and I am the Founder and Executive Director of Nuestra Comunidad (NC), a non-profit organization that serves Napa, Sonoma, Mendocino, Humboldt, and Del Norte counties.

Before founding NC, I spent over 18 years as a 9-1-1 dispatcher. One of the most impactful nights of my career was working during the 2017 Sonoma Complex Fires. I answered **call after call** from people fleeing their homes, separated from loved ones, and **desperately searching for information and help.**

That experience changed my life. It **not only** became the catalyst for starting NC, but it continues to fuel my passion for strengthening California's emergency support systems and my strong support for AB 1832.

One thing I learned during my years in emergency communications **is** that 9-1-1 and 2-1-1 are not separate systems. **They are interdependent systems.**

During a disaster, 9-1-1 **should** be focused on life-threatening emergencies where lives and property are in immediate danger.

But when people need evacuation information, shelter locations, food assistance, transportation resources, utility updates, or other disaster-related information, **they need somewhere else to turn.**

**That is where 2-1-1 becomes critical.**

A strong 2-1-1 system **allows** 9-1-1 to operate at its optimum capacity by handling non-urgent calls and connecting people to resources and information that do not require an emergency response. This **preserves** valuable emergency resources and ensures dispatchers, firefighters, law enforcement, and paramedics **can focus on saving lives.**

At NC, we have physical locations in **Sonoma, Humboldt, and Del Norte counties** and serve communities that **are often** the **last** to receive resources and the **first** to feel the impacts of disasters.

Every day, we work with seniors, immigrant families, rural residents, and individuals with limited English proficiency who **rely on trusted systems** to help them navigate emergencies.

**AB 1832 recognizes that 2-1-1 is not simply a referral line. It is essential emergency infrastructure.**

Investing in 2-1-1 **is investing** in a **stronger 9-1-1 system, more resilient communities,** and a California that is better prepared for the disasters we know will come.

I respectfully ask for your support of AB 1832. Thank you.