

## **Ohio 211 Introduction and Statewide Coalition | Hailey Barr – United Way of Greater Cincinnati**

Chair White, Vice Chair Salvo, Ranking Member Lett, and members of the Children & Human Services Committee thank you for your leadership and for allowing us to provide testimony today.

I am Hailey Barr, and I have the privilege of living in Butler County and working in Hamilton County at United Way of Greater Cincinnati. I work on public policy and advocacy initiatives on behalf of the organization.

I am here today alongside my colleague Dr. Gavi Begtrup to testify in support of state funding for Ohio 211. 211 launched nationally 25 years ago in 2000, and the service was launched in Ohio just one year later in 2001.

United Ways operates five call centers in Ohio, and other nonprofit organizations and a public library run the others across the state.

### Ohio 211 Providers

Area Agency on Aging 3	Ashtabula County Community Action Agency
Fairfield County 211	Mansfield Richland County Public Library
Lutheran Social Services 211 Central Ohio	Help Network of Northeast Ohio
Helpline of Delaware Morrow County	Lifeline, Inc.
Pathways of Central Ohio	United Way of Greater Cincinnati
United Way of Greater Cleveland	United Way of Greater Dayton Area
United Way of Summit & Medina	United Way of Greater Toledo

Ohio 211 lives in the same ecosystem as 911 and 988 with 911 being used for emergency services and 988 being used for mental health services. 211 is the number to call for other needs, such as housing, utility assistance, child care, transportation, and other vital services in our communities.

By dialing 211, Ohioans can speak with a 211 team member who can refer them to any number of resources from their robust databases. No matter the situation, 211 staff listen, identify underlying problems, and connect people in need with community resources and services that improve their well-being.

As of today, Ohio 211 lacks the revenue needed to cover all 88 counties in the state. In fact, people in 30 counties aren't able to access 211 resources, meaning millions of Ohioans don't have the support they desperately need.

This could be mitigated with support from the State of Ohio. Ohio's 211 system does not currently receive state funds. Instead, the 14 affiliates operate through a combination of local and philanthropic funding. An investment from the State would allow Ohio 211 to expand service in areas that currently lack coverage. With enhanced capacity, existing providers could assume higher call volumes.

Neighboring states, including Indiana, Michigan, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania all provide state funding for 211. Ohio is one of only a few states that does not have 211 full state coverage.

Ohio 211 is a necessary service for Ohioans. For decades, 211 has provided neighbors an opportunity to connect with a trained professional who can answer each inquiry thoughtfully and provide updated information.

Thank you for taking the time to hear from us today.

Chair White, if it is advisable by you, I would like to turn it over to my colleague, Dr. Begtrup, for his testimony. I will be happy to answer any questions following his time.