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May 11, 2021

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and other distinguished members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee, my name is Vince Brancaccio, Ohio AIRS President and CEO of Help Network of Northeast Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on Amended Substitute House Bill 110.

I write to express my support to include \$2 million of funding for the 211 program in the FY 2022-2023 State Operating Budget. State funding would sustain current services and expand 211 to counties without access or with limited access to 211 services across Ohio (36 counties). Funding would be provided to United Way of Greater Cleveland and the Ohio Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS).

211 is a free, 24/7/365 service for individuals who live in Ohio. Live 211 navigators receive calls from individuals and match the callers' needs to available resources in their community, such as employment, food, housing, utility assistance, counseling, substance use treatment, legal assistance, tax preparation, and health care.


211 - During the COVID-19 pandemic, Help Network of Northeast Ohio has handled 83,627 (March 2020-March 2021) contacts/calls 24/7/365 for Mahoning, Columbiana, and Trumbull counties. Afterhours 365 after 5:00 p.m. for Ashtabula County 211 and Lake County 211.

The pandemic created an increased need for: food, rent, mental health services, and suicide prevention services.

In 2020, Help Network of Northeast Ohio's 211 has handled over 78,610 calls/requests for help.

Without connection to 211, these individuals may have ended up in emergency rooms, shelters, or other costly state programs. 211 is a critical service to our communities, and we have seen the important work they do around the state since the beginning of the pandemic. We urge you to support this critical budget request to help aid in the health, emotional, and financial recovery of our communities and state.

Sincerely,

  
Vince Brancaccio MSSA, LISW-S  
Chief Executive Officer  
Help Network of Northeast Ohio



American Association of Suicidology



**Contract Agency of:** Mahoning County Mental Health & Recovery Board; Columbiana and Ashtabula County Mental Health and Recovery Services Boards; Trumbull County Mental Health and Recovery Board; Mahoning and Columbiana County Departments of Job and Family Services; United Way; Mahoning County Children Services Board; Mahoning, Columbiana, and Trumbull County Boards of Developmental Disabilities; Ohio Attorney General's Office of Crime Victims Services and National Suicide Prevention Lifeline