

Testimony in Support of HB 669
Health and Human Service Referral Systems – Modifications
House Health and Government Committee
March 5, 2020
Submitted by: Steve Rohde, Health and Human Service Referral Board

SUPPORT

Good afternoon, Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Peña-Melnyk and honorable members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to comment on **HB 669 Health and Human Service Referral Systems – Modifications**. This proposed legislation does several things, including proposing to: eliminate the statutory cap on the number of call centers that can be included in the 2-1-1 Maryland network, transition the oversight and guidance functions from the Health and Human Service Referral Board to the 2-1-1 Maryland Board in consultation with the Maryland Department of Health. In addition, there is an amendment that requires the Department to study the cost of providing the 2-1-1 Maryland call in service.

As you may know, nationally 2-1-1 is recognized as the most comprehensive source of locally curated social service information. Those staff providing service through the 2-1-1 Maryland system are the “boots on the ground”, the local experts who make finding help easier. Those accessing the 2-1-1 Maryland system can find help with:

- Supplemental food and nutrition programs
- Shelter and housing options and utilities assistance
- Emergency information and disaster relief
- Employment and education opportunities
- Service for veterans
- Health care, vaccination and health epidemic information (including a section on the Corona Virus and what individual should know)
- Addiction prevention and rehabilitation program
- Reentry help for ex-offenders
- Support groups for individuals in the area of mental health and special needs
- A safe, confidential path out of physical and/or emotional domestic abuse

This proposed legislation encapsulates the recommendations agreed to by the Health and Human Service Referral Board in its fall 2019 meeting and shared in *The Maryland*

Health and Human Service Referral Board Report 2019. Those recommendations include:

1. Conduct a cost analysis to determine appropriate funding levels;
2. Continue to recognize and support 2-1-1 Maryland as the primary, comprehensive source of information for Maryland;
3. Provide that state agencies consult with 2-1-1 Maryland prior to establishing a new health and human service line;
4. Establish the 2-1-1 Maryland Board as the primary oversight board, phasing out the Health and Human Service Review Board, and including the transfer of three appointed members of the HHSRB be transferred to 2-1-1 Maryland.

I've attached to this written testimony a scan of the infographic from page 4 of that 2019 report that shows the volume of calls and online connections made through the 2-1-1 Maryland service in 2019. The report documents that Statewide call volume increased more than 10% from FY 2018 to FY 2019 with an overall increase of 39% over the last seven years. The proposed legislation proposes efficiencies that will improve the service further.

Thank you for your consideration of this opportunity to provide better resources to our residents in need. I respectfully request a favorable report for HB 669.

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