

SB890_Zucker_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Senator Craig Zucker

Position: FAV

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Budget and Taxation Committee
Chair, Capital Budget Subcommittee

Chair, Senate Democratic Caucus

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Craig J. Zucker
Senate Bill 890 - Maryland Department of Health - 2-1-1 Maryland - Oversight
Senate Finance Committee

March 21, 2023

1:00 PM

Position: Favorable

Good afternoon, Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and distinguished members of the committee. It is my pleasure to testify today in **support of Senate Bill 890 - Maryland Department of Health - 2-1-1 Maryland - Oversight Senate Finance Committee.**

2-1-1 Maryland is the only entity in the state that provides service 24/7/365 connection to vital health and human services in the state such as suicide and crisis intervention, food resources, housing and shelter, aging & disabilities, and much more. Senate Bill 890 updates the functions of the 2-1-1 Maryland board, which was the intention of the Thomas Bloom Raskin Act, that was passed unanimously in the House and the Senate in 2021. This legislation also adds clarifying language regarding the public-private partnership between 2-1-1 Maryland and the Maryland Department of Health, that puts the evaluation of performance back in the hands of 2-1-1 Maryland.

As 2-1-1 Maryland continues to grow and more Marylanders seek out resources, Senate Bill 890 will assist 2-1-1 in effectively carrying out their mission and effectively connecting Marylanders to important services they need.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 890. Thank you for your kind consideration.

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Uploaded by: State of Maryland (MD)

Position: FAV



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Acting Secretary
March 21, 2023

The Honorable Melony Griffith
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB 890 – Maryland Department of Health - 2-1-1 Maryland - Oversight – Letter of Support

Dear Chair Griffith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) respectfully submits this letter of support for SB 890 - Maryland Department of Health - 2-1-1 Maryland - Oversight.

MDH provides oversight to 2-1-1 Maryland as outlined in their Articles of Incorporation. This oversight role is codified in Maryland Statute. This bill further clarifies MDH's oversight role related to 2-1-1 Maryland and the associated call centers. Under current statute, MDH is charged with evaluating the performance of each 2-1-1 Maryland call center and this legislation places this function back in the hands of 2-1-1 Maryland.

MDH has contractual agreements with 2-1-1 Maryland to perform a variety of services including information and referral. 2-1-1 Maryland in turn has contractual agreements with call centers to perform these services. 2-1-1 Maryland directly contracts with the call centers and is in the best position to evaluate the performance of the call centers and ensure the work they are performing is aligned with the contractual agreements.

Since December 2021, MDH and 2-1-1 Maryland have worked collaboratively to strengthen the relationship. MDH meets bi-weekly with the Board Chair, Vice Chair, and Executive Director of 2-1-1 Maryland to discuss strategic plans and priorities to ensure close alignment. These meetings also provide a forum to address any issues, concerns, or challenges that arise. Prior to this legislation being introduced, 2-1-1 Maryland and MDH also worked collaboratively to review and provide feedback on this proposed legislation.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Megan Peters, Acting Director of Governmental Affairs at megan.peters@maryland.gov or (410) 260-3190.

Sincerely,

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Acting Secretary

SB890 - 211 Maryland System Founding Call Center O

Uploaded by: Caitlin McDonough

Position: UNF

March 8, 2023

Re: 211 Founding Call Center Organization Concerns Regarding SB/890HB340 and HB1124 re: 211

Dear Committee Chairs and Members:

We, the founding call center organizations of the 211 Maryland System, have since the early 2000s worked to establish, build, and maintain a robust health and human service information and referral system for the betterment of Maryland. We are reaching out to express our concerns with respect to the 211 System, including issues we see with the leadership and management of the Maryland Information Network (MIN and dba 211 Maryland, Inc.), a nonprofit coordinating body for the 211 Maryland System and have grave concerns re: SB0890/HB340 and HB1124.

Ensuring that the people of Maryland are served well when they contact 211 has been our ‘true north’ since we began the development of 211 in 2000 – long before our four organizations co-created MIN in 2011 to serve as a ‘coordinating body’ for the 211 Maryland System.

It is our collective view that MIN is not serving the people of Maryland well. Its management is not working effectively with us, impeding operations, progress, the future direction of the 211 Maryland System and the information resource industry in Maryland as a whole. We have decades of experience and successful outcomes in building and running call centers, delivering on-the-ground 24/7/365 and shaping strategy and partnerships for the evolution of this industry.

We bring to your attention the following issues.

1) Transparency – There is a lack of transparency re: MIN’s strategic direction, plans and decisions that directly affect our organizations without our involvement in the process when we are the on-the-ground experts, providers, partners and fundraisers as well as thought leaders in the information industry space.

2) Communication - There is limited and, at times, an entire lack of communication re: meetings, services and operations as well as inappropriate communications based on the levels of employees that MIN is addressing. Communication from MIN is poor overall at best. Staff are hired and new initiatives started without our knowledge or any consultation about our ongoing lived experiences that would greatly benefit the definition of and hiring for the position or the initiative. This creates confusion for those in the community as well as funders and service providers. For example, MIN hired a Community Engagement Coordinator whose efforts appear to be duplicative of what our organizations already do, except for the fact that we are equipped with both the in-depth local and often statewide and national knowledge and relationships that make for effective partnership opportunities.

3) Troubleshooting/Customer Service – MIN is quick to listen to issues, but nothing gets resolved – even urgent matters such as the 211 website for which MIN is responsible. This is

where many providers and community members may seek resources directly online. This affects not only our ability to serve those who contact 211 as a lifeline when they need it most, but our reputation as well.

4) Payments - There is a continuing lack of timely payment for services that have been rendered by our staff members. The harsh reality is that the funding that each of our organizations receives from MIN through State of Maryland resources is a fraction of what it costs each of us to provide 211 services. While MIN is dipping its toes into the revenue generation space, its ability to fundraise is not a well-honed skill compared to what our organizations have done for decades in meeting budgetary requirements of each call center.

5) Meeting Management – There is poor meeting management at all levels - executive and operational - not only in terms of objectives and agendas, but also putting inappropriate groups of participants together – e.g., board members and our day-to-day operational staff. This disrupts progress and workflow at the very least.

6) 211 Resource Database Ownership - We believe that MIN is also violating the terms of a signed agreement (2012) which acknowledges that United Way of Central Maryland (UWCM) owns the resource database for 211 and that we all simply have the right to access it in the course of our daily work in exchange for helping to keep it current. MIN has informed us that they have built out that database - and have done so without UWCM's knowledge or permission - and intend to use it for FY2024 funding agreements which entail the use of a new centralized system.

We also have serious concerns about the quality of the information in the records of the database that MIN has been working on which could negatively affect people in Maryland, which would not only hurt those in need of services, but also damage the reputation of our organizations who have long been associated with 211. The 211 System is only as good as its database and those who operate it.

7) Restrictions on Building Effective Partnerships That Serve the People of Maryland - For two decades our four organizations have been the heart of the statewide cross-sector initiatives to build the 211 Maryland System, each contributing to the best of, and sometimes well beyond, our respective organizations' capacities from service, funding, advocacy, relationship building, training, marketing, and related standpoints. We were written into the Maryland law in 2010 that made 211 the primary number in Maryland for access to information about resources, and we were the ones who co-created MIN to serve as a coordinating body.

An invaluable part of building the credibility and utility of the 211 Maryland System has been leveraging the unique local - and often statewide and national - knowledge about issues, resources, and public, private, and nonprofit partners that each of our organizations possesses. This has resulted in partnerships, programs, and initiatives that enhanced 211 Maryland's value as a hub for information about and easier access to services. We have worked collaboratively to support these sometimes more local programs, presenting publicly as a '211 Maryland System' and thereby helping to elevate the entire system. MIN is now informing us that we cannot enter partnerships; that everything must be done through them when they often lack the knowledge, capacity, and relationships that we have and/or commit the system to programs without an

awareness/understanding of what it takes to deliver on a given partnership. This results in poorly managed programs that put the 211 Maryland System's overall reputation at risk. We are concerned about the downward spiral that this may create for the 211 Maryland System.

While MIN is exploring what it deems as evolutionary steps, its process in doing so, including the pursuit of HB340 and HB1124, is woefully lacking in engaging the very organizations that have decades of experience in what it takes to drive and achieve change. In our view, what MIN is attempting to do is beyond the scope of the Maryland statutory framework and contrary to the interest of the system as a whole.

We are not being treated as the true partners, experienced experts and founders of the 211 System that we are. These issues have led to fundamental concerns about stewardship of the 211 Maryland System. Our organizations want three things:

1. To be heard, valued and leveraged as the founders of the 211 Maryland System and co-creators of MIN, the vision for the future that we bring, boots-on-the ground experience and the unique skills and talents that we have, given our sizes; locations; and local, state, and national relationships that go far beyond the current state of MIN. A solution to these systemic issues must include representatives from the four local call center organizations, MIN, and various State of Maryland agencies to ensure a strong system of support for Marylanders.
2. To ensure that our interests are protected because we have a proven track record of service in good times and bad, including throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, ramping up an additional 80 call specialists in a matter of days to handle the enormous increase in call volume due to the pandemic. This point also includes the matter of database ownership by UWCM, and
3. To ensure that service to the people of Maryland is at the front and center of all decisions.

We urge you not to pass SB0890/HB340 or HB1124 at this time, but to engage us in the process moving forward to reach a more effective solution.

Sincerely,



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Franklyn Baker
President and Chief Executive Officer
The United Way of Central Maryland, Inc.

LETTER OF CONCERN RE: 211 AND HB340 AND HB1124 MARCH 8, 2023

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FB Testimony - SB890 Hearing - 3-21-23 FINAL.pdf

Uploaded by: Franklyn Baker

Position: UNF

Franklyn Baker Testimony: SB0890 Hearing - March 21, 2023

Good afternoon. I'm Franklyn Baker, President and CEO of United Way of Central Maryland and happy to provide testimony on Senate Bill 0890. For this opportunity, I thank HGO Committee Chairperson Delegate Melnyk and Vice Chairperson Senator Cullison along with Bill Sponsors Senators Zucker and Augustine.

United Way of Central Maryland along with three other 211 Maryland Call Center operators (Community Crisis Center, Life Crisis Center and Mental Health Association of Frederick County) worked together to launch the 211 Maryland system 23 years ago. This included the creation of the nonprofit organization – 211 Maryland Inc. now operating as Maryland Information Network.

These four founding Call Center operators care deeply about ensuring Maryland residents have access to the highest quality of information to support their health and human resources needs. We created 211 Maryland Inc. to serve as a “coordinating” body working in partnership and collaboration with the Founding Call Center operators while being accountable to a Maryland entity – Health and Human Services Referral Board at the time, and more recently, the Maryland Department of Health. This was all done to ensure our voices are heard, our interests are protected, and the people of Maryland are optimally served.

It is our collective view that the Maryland Information Network is not serving the people of Maryland well. Its management is not working effectively with us, they've impeded operations, progress, the future direction of the 211 Maryland System and the information resource industry in Maryland as a whole. With many of their legislative, operational and fundraising actions, they have not worked in collaboration with us.

We have decades of experience and successful outcomes in building and running call centers, delivering on-the-ground 24/7/365, deeply understanding the certification standards and what it takes to keep a growing database updated and relevant, using data from 400,000+ calls per year to make referral and intervention decisions linked to social determinants of health for Marylanders, and shaping strategy and critical partnerships with stakeholders ranging from governments, health care, and nonprofits to corporations and foundations for both immediate urgent needs and the evolution of this vital resource information industry.

We respectfully request that SB0890 is delayed pending more detailed discussions to determine the best way to ensure Maryland residents receive optimal services and support.