

106TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2815

To provide for the nationwide designation of 2-1-1 as a toll-free telephone number for access to information and referrals on human services, to encourage the deployment of the toll-free telephone number, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 29, 2000

Mr. CLELAND (for himself and Ms. SNOWE) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

A BILL

To provide for the nationwide designation of 2-1-1 as a toll-free telephone number for access to information and referrals on human services, to encourage the deployment of the toll-free telephone number, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. NATIONWIDE DESIGNATION OF TOLL-FREE**
2 **TELEPHONE NUMBER FOR ACCESS TO**
3 **HUMAN SERVICES INFORMATION AND RE-**
4 **FERRAL.**

5 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following find-
6 ings:

7 (1) N–1–1 codes, or 3-digit abbreviated dialing
8 telephone numbers, provide Americans with easy, ef-
9 ficient, nationwide access to emergency and non-
10 emergency information that serves the public inter-
11 est.

12 (2) Individuals and families often find it dif-
13 ficult to navigate the complex and ever growing
14 maze of human services agencies and programs and
15 often spend inordinate amounts of time in trying to
16 identify the agency or program that provides a serv-
17 ice that may be immediately or urgently required.

18 (3) Americans desire to volunteer and become
19 involved in their communities, and this desire, to-
20 gether with a desire to donate to organizations
21 which provide human services, are among the rea-
22 sons to call a center which provides information and
23 referrals on human services.

24 (4) The number “2–1–1” is easy-to-remember
25 and universally recognizable and would serve well as
26 the designation of a telephone service for linking in-

1 individuals and families to information and referral
2 centers which could, in turn, make critical connec-
3 tions between individuals and families in need and
4 appropriate human services agencies, including both
5 community-based organizations and government
6 agencies.

7 (5) United Ways and other non-profit and gov-
8 ernmental centers that provide information about
9 and referrals to human services have secured fund-
10 ing for the establishment, implementation, and cur-
11 rent operation in the United States of three centers
12 that provide such information and referrals and are
13 accessed through the telephone number 2-1-1.

14 (6) United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta, Con-
15 tact Helpline of Columbus, Georgia, and United
16 Way of Connecticut currently utilize the telephone
17 number 2-1-1 for the purpose of access to informa-
18 tion about and referral to human services.

19 (7) Since United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta
20 and United Way of Connecticut switched from 10-
21 digit telephone numbers for access to their centers
22 of information and referral on human services to the
23 telephone number 2-1-1 for access to such centers,
24 the volume of calls received at such centers has in-
25 creased by approximately 40 percent. The centers of

1 United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta and United
2 Way of Connecticut each handled approximately
3 200,000 calls in 1999.

4 (8) Rapid deployment nationwide of the tele-
5 phone number 2-1-1 as a means of access to infor-
6 mation about and referral to human services re-
7 quires coordination among State governments and
8 the information and referral centers of many local-
9 ities.

10 (9) Alabama, Massachusetts, North Carolina,
11 and Utah have approved petitions for the implemen-
12 tation of the telephone number 2-1-1 statewide for
13 that purpose, and implementation of the use of that
14 number for that purpose is underway. Jurisdictions
15 in Louisiana and Tennessee have also designated the
16 use of 2-1-1 for that purpose.

17 (10) Ohio, South Dakota, Texas, and Wisconsin
18 are considering petitions to designate the telephone
19 number 2-1-1 for that purpose.

20 (11) Florida and Virginia have developed state-
21 wide models for telephone access for that purpose.

22 (12) The use of 2-1-1 for that purpose is being
23 considered by nearly every other State.

24 (b) DESIGNATION OF TOLL-FREE HUMAN SERVICES
25 ACCESS TELEPHONE NUMBER.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Section 251(e) of the Com-
2 munications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 251(e)) is
3 amended by adding at the end the following new
4 paragraph:

5 “(3) HUMAN SERVICES ACCESS TELEPHONE
6 NUMBER.—

7 “(A) DESIGNATION.—The Commission,
8 and each commission or other entity to which
9 the Commission has delegated authority under
10 this subsection, shall designate 2-1-1 as a toll-
11 free telephone number within the United States
12 for access to information and referral centers
13 for information about and referral to providers
14 of human services, including information and
15 referrals for purposes of volunteering and mak-
16 ing donations.

17 “(B) APPLICABILITY.—The designation
18 under subparagraph (A) shall apply to wire and
19 wireless telephone service.

20 “(C) PAYMENT OF COSTS.—The costs of a
21 telecommunications carrier in providing access
22 to a provider of information and referrals
23 through the telephone number designated under
24 this paragraph shall be borne by the provider of
25 such information and referrals.

1 “(D) CALL LOCATION INFORMATION.—
 2 Nothing in this paragraph shall be construed to
 3 require any telecommunications carrier to pro-
 4 vide call location information to a provider of
 5 information or referrals on human services
 6 through the telephone number designated under
 7 this paragraph.

8 “(E) DEFINITIONS.—In this paragraph:

9 “(i) HUMAN SERVICES.—The term
 10 ‘human services’ means services as follows:

11 “(I) Services that assist individ-
 12 uals in becoming more self-sufficient,
 13 in preventing dependency, and in
 14 strengthening family relationships.

15 “(II) Services that support per-
 16 sonal and social development.

17 “(III) Services that help ensure
 18 the well-being of individuals, families,
 19 and communities.

20 “(ii) INFORMATION AND REFERRAL
 21 CENTER.—The term ‘information and re-
 22 ferral center’ means a center that—

23 “(I) maintains a database of pro-
 24 viders of human services in a State or
 25 locality; and

1 “(II) assists individuals, families,
2 and communities in identifying, un-
3 derstanding, and accessing such pro-
4 viders and the human services offered
5 by such providers.”.

6 (2) TRANSITION.—The Federal Communica-
7 tions Commission shall provide for the implementa-
8 tion within a reasonable period of time of the des-
9 ignation required by paragraph (3) of section 251(e)
10 of the Communications Act of 1934, as added by
11 paragraph (1) of this subsection, throughout the
12 areas of the United States where the designation is
13 not in effect as of the date of the enactment of this
14 Act.

15 (c) SUPPORT FOR STATE EFFORTS.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall en-
17 courage and support efforts by States to develop and
18 implement the use of the toll-free telephone number
19 2–1–1 for access to providers of information and re-
20 ferrals on human services.

21 (2) ACTIVITIES.—In providing encouragement
22 and support under paragraph (1), the Commission
23 shall—

24 (A) consult with appropriate State offi-
25 cials, including State human services agencies,

1 and appropriate representatives of the tele-
2 communications industry, United Ways, Alli-
3 ance of Information and Referral Systems
4 (AIRS), AIRS affiliates, law enforcement and
5 emergency service providers, and local non-prof-
6 it and governmental information and referral
7 centers; and

8 (B) encourage States to coordinate state-
9 wide implementation of the use of the telephone
10 number in consultation with such representa-
11 tives.

12 (3) PROHIBITION ON IMPOSITION OF OBLIGA-
13 TIONS OR COSTS.—Nothing in this subsection shall
14 be construed to authorize or require the Commission
15 to impose an obligation or cost on any person.

16 (d) PROVISION OF CALL INFORMATION.—Section
17 222(d) of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C.
18 222(d)) is amended—

19 (1) by striking “or” at the end of paragraph
20 (2);

21 (2) by striking the period at the end of para-
22 graph (3) and inserting “; or”; and

23 (3) by adding at the end the following:

1 “(4) to provide call information when required
2 by applicable law.”.

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