Subject Line: **211 and the 2023-24 Budget**

Dear Senator/Assemblyperson:

On behalf of United Way of New York State, our local United Way, and individuals across the state who rely on 211 to obtain information and referral on critical health and human services, we write to respectfully **request $2.4 million in funding to be included in the FY 2024 budget for 211 NY, Inc.**

**If you have already signed on** to the letter that has been coordinated by Senators Harkman and Griffo, and Assemblymembers Lupardo, Hevesi, and Goodell, as a constituent, I thank you for your support!

**If you have not yet signed on,** this funding is essential to help maintain the 211 system across the state. **Over the last 2 ½ years call volume to 211 increased by over 153%.** Currently, there is increased demand for housing, rental assistance, and food as inflation continues and state and federal programs aimed to help with rent and food have concluded. In addition, the system continues to partner and be a resource for local governments across New York. The network has over 60 contracts with local governments to assist with after hour calls, rental assistance, emergency shelters, foster care recruitment, and emergency heating.

Last year, with the funding allocated by the Legislature, 211 was able to implement texting capacity across the state. This feature will enable to 211 system to push out information but also be a resource for those individuals who might be willing to pick up the phone and make a call.

211 continues to be a lifeline during natural disasters and is the number New Yorkers call when they need help and don’t know where to start. These disasters no matter the type require the same response- information sharing, connection/referral, distribution of food or supplies, and equally important, a human connection who helps residents know they will get through it.

COVID tested the system’s capacity and 211 was not only able to adapt and respond, but also create efficiencies and expand its role to help New Yorkers in need. **We must ensure that this system is maintained and the support from the Legislature is the only state support received.**

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely your constituent,