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April 29, 2008

The Honorable Louis D. Greenwald, Chairman
Assembly Budget Committee
c/o David J. Rosen
Legislative Budget and Finance Officer
State House Annex
PO Box 068
Trenton, NJ 08625-0068

Dear Chairman Greenwald:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Assembly Budget Committee on Thursday, April 17, with Attorney General Milgram. I write to provide Assemblywoman Karrow with more information on the state's 2-1-1 telephone-system.

New Jersey 2-1-1 was launched statewide in February 2005 by the NJ 2-1-1 Partnership, a subsidiary of the United Ways of New Jersey. It is operational by landline, cell phone and the Internet. The 2-1-1 service provides residents with an easy-to-remember three-digit telephone number to access health and human services, government programs and community resources. A searchable data base is also available online at www.nj211.org.

Calls are answered 24 hours a day, seven days a week by credentialed call center specialists. The service offers immediate access to translation services in over 170 languages and dialects as well as TTY access for the hearing impaired. 2-1-1 is currently averaging 16,000 calls per month.

My office has undertaken an initiative to make greater use of 2-1-1 by including it in the state's emergency communication network. The 2-1-1 service has been successful in assisting state and local officials disseminate important information to the public during and after emergencies. Last April, 2-1-1 was used to assist residents affected by the Nor'easter storm and flooding. The service received 335 flood-related calls from residents in the state's nine affected counties.

As Assemblywoman Karrow pointed out correctly, 2-1-1 is in the process of restructuring its call center operations, reducing the number of call centers from nine to two. This is an initiative undertaken by the NJ 2-1-1 Partnership in its role as manager of the service and is separate and apart from the state's use and funding.

However, it is my understanding that the NJ 2-1-1 Partnership issued a request for proposal seeking bids to provide call center services for two statewide call centers. Once

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selected through an open bidding process, the fewer number of call centers will not be noticeable to callers and should not negatively affect the critical services provided to 2-1-1 clients.

Assemblywoman Karrow also raised questions about state funding for 2-1-1. While the state has committed to provide funding for 2-1-1 in fiscal year 2008, I am not yet aware of any funding commitments from any state department/agency for fiscal year 2009.

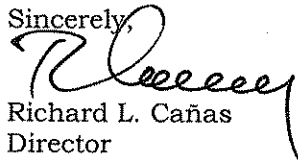
For fiscal year 2008, the state committed \$786,568 from the following sources:

Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness	\$269,000
Legislature	\$250,000
Department of Human Services	\$97,568
Department of Health & Senior Services	\$90,000
Office of Information Technology	\$50,000
Department of Children & Families	\$30,000

This \$786,568 in state funding for 2008 represents only a portion of the service's total budget of \$1,916,568. The majority of the budget is provided by funding from local United Way affiliates and certain county governments who have made investments in 2-1-1.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me directly. Thank you for your continued cooperation.

Sincerely,



Richard L. Cañas
Director

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