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RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

January 26, 2007

Mr. Elia Germani  
Chairman  
Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission  
89 Jefferson Boulevard  
Warwick, RI 02888

Dear Chairman Germani,

As you know, United Way has been working with numerous partners to develop a 211 system for Rhode Island. We have been in touch with your Executive Counsel, Steve Frias, to assure that we have taken every step necessary for a smooth launch. He suggested recently that to avoid any confusion and in abundance of caution, we should submit a petition to the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission seeking authority to implement 211 in Rhode Island.

We have enclosed a petition in this mailing, and respectfully request that it be considered as expeditiously as possible.

Sincerely,

Anthony Maione  
President & CEO

cc: ✓ Steven Frias, Executive Counsel, RI Public Utilities Commission  
Thomas Ahearn, Director, RI Division of Public Utilities and Carriers  
Donna Cupelo, President, Verizon-Rhode Island  
John Wolfe, VP Public Affairs & Government Relations, Cox Communications, RI area  
Jane Hayward, Secretary, Executive Office of Health and Human Services

January 26, 2007

## Petition to the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission Regarding Assignment of 2-1-1 to United Way of Rhode Island

Pursuant to the RIPUC Procedural Rule 1.10(a), United Way of Rhode Island petitions the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission for the authority to implement 211 in Rhode Island.

From paragraph 21 of FCC 00-256 3<sup>rd</sup> Report and Order:

We therefore assign 211 to be used to provide access to community information and referral services. Similar to the Commission's national assignment in the N11 First Report and Order of 311 for access to non-emergency police and other government services, we direct that, when a provider of telecommunications services receives a request from an entity (e.g., the United Way) to use 211 for access to community information and referral services, the telecommunications provider must: (1) ensure that any entities that were using 211 at the local level prior to the effective date of this Order relinquish use of the code for non-compliant services, and (2) take any steps necessary (such as reprogramming switch software) to complete 211 calls from its subscribers to the requesting entity in its service area....

As of November 2006 there were 209 active 2-1-1 systems covering all or part of 41 states (including 18 states with 100% coverage) serving approximately 193 million Americans - over 65% of the US population. Local United Ways play a key role in a majority of the sites, beginning with the creation of the first 2-1-1 system by the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta in 1997.

In May of 2006, our Board of Directors approved a major annual financial commitment for the operation of *United Way 2-1-1 in Rhode Island* (UW211RI). This will provide an important service for all Rhode Island individuals and families every day of the year, and will be available to play a key role in the state's disaster response information system. The efficiency of a comprehensive one-stop call center will benefit both nonprofit and public health and human service providers.

Our board's decision to make this significant commitment to community service was based on a feasibility study and subsequent planning undertaken with a community partnership that included representatives from Crossroads RI, Salvation Army, the Red Cross, the Community Action Program agencies, the RI Foundation, the DEA and DHS. We have initiated discussions with Verizon and Cox to expedite the telephone programming required for the service while we build the infrastructure of UW211RI, as well as wireless providers.

We will be building on the existing I&R system currently operated by Crossroads RI. We aim to test the service during the Spring of 2007 and launch the service publicly in the Summer 2007. Oversight of the service will be provided by the United Way Board through an advisory committee comprised of many of the original planning partners with the addition of representatives from the OHHS and RI Housing, with Crossroads RI contracted as the provider. In addition, we have met with the planners of the 3-1-1 government information line now in development, and have agreed to work together to coordinate 2-1-1 and 3-1-1 for maximum effectiveness and efficiency. We also intend to allay public confusion about the array of three digit codes in the state by including listings and descriptions for each in our publications and on the United Way 211 web page.