

SENATE BILL 445

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CF HB 353

By: **Senators Zucker and Augustine**

Introduced and read first time: January 22, 2024

Assigned to: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

Senate action: Adopted

Read second time: March 23, 2024

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Maryland Department of Health – 2–1–1 Maryland – Oversight**

3 FOR the purpose of defining the term “Health and Human Services Referral System” for
4 the purposes of certain provisions of law governing the System to mean a certain
5 coordinated system for health and human service resources that is accessible to State
6 residents, rather than a certain telephone service; altering the definition of “2–1–1
7 Maryland” to clarify that it is the entity that administers the 2–1–1 system in the
8 State; repealing the requirement that the Maryland Department of Health evaluate
9 the performance of certain call centers and make certain recommendations regarding
10 the quality of service provided by call centers and corrective action to be taken by a
11 call center; and generally relating to 2–1–1 Maryland.

12 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
13 Article – Health – General
14 Section 24–1201 through 24–1204
15 Annotated Code of Maryland
16 (2023 Replacement Volume)

17 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
18 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

19 **Article – Health – General**

20 24–1201.

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



(a) In this subtitle the following words have the meanings indicated.

(b) “Health and Human Services Referral System” means [telephone service that automatically connects an individual dialing the digits 2–1–1 to an established information and referral answering point] **A COORDINATED SYSTEM FOR HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICE RESOURCES ACCESSIBLE TO ALL STATE RESIDENTS THROUGH 2–1–1 AND OTHER DESIGNATED TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS.**

(c) “2–1–1” means the abbreviated dialing code assigned by the Federal Communications Commission for consumer access to community information and referral services.

(d) “2–1–1 Maryland” means the Maryland Information Network, 2–1–1 Maryland, a 501(c)(3) corporation in the State **THAT ADMINISTERS THE 2–1–1 SYSTEM.**

(e) “2–1–1 Maryland call center” means a nonprofit agency or organization designated by 2–1–1 Maryland to provide 2–1–1 services.

24–1202.

(a) The General Assembly:

(1) Recognizes the importance of a statewide information and referral system for health and human services;

(2) Recognizes that an integrated [telephone] **TECHNOLOGY** system would provide **ACCESS TO** a single source for information and referral to health and human services, community preparedness, and [crisis information] **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE COORDINATION** and could be accessed toll free from anywhere in Maryland, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year;

(3) Acknowledges that the three–digit number, 2–1–1, is a nationally recognized and applied telephone number which may be used for information and referral and eliminates delays caused by lack of familiarity with health and human services numbers and by understandable confusion in circumstances of crisis; and

(4) Recognizes a demonstrated need for an easy to remember, easy to use telephone number that will enable individuals in need to be directed to available community resources.

(b) The purpose of this subtitle is to establish the three–digit number, 2–1–1, as the primary information and referral telephone number for health and human services in the State.

24–1203.

(a) Except as provided in subsection (c) of this section, an agency or organization shall be approved by 2-1-1 Maryland as a 2-1-1 Maryland call center in order to provide 2-1-1 services in the State.

(b) When approving a 2-1-1 service provider, 2-1-1 Maryland shall consider:

(1) The ability of the proposed 2-1-1 service provider to meet the national 2-1-1 standards recommended by:

(i) The Alliance of Information and Referral Systems and adopted by the National 2-1-1 Collaborative; or

(ii) An equivalent entity;

(2) The financial stability of the proposed 2-1-1 service provider;

(3) Any community support for the proposed 2-1-1 service provider;

(4) Any experience that the proposed 2-1-1 service provider has with other information and referral services;

(5) The degree to which the county in which the proposed call center is to be located has dedicated substantial resources to the establishment of a single telephone source for non-emergency inquiries regarding county services; and

(6) Any other criteria that 2-1-1 Maryland considers appropriate.

(c) If [a unit] **AN AGENCY** of the State that provides health and human services establishes a public information telephone line or hotline, the [unit] **AGENCY** shall consult with 2-1-1 Maryland about using the 2-1-1 system to provide public access to information.

24-1204.

(a) The Department shall, in consultation with 2-1-1 Maryland, as appropriate:

(1) Maintain public information available from State agencies, programs, and departments that provide health and human services;

(2) Support projects and activities that further the development of 2-1-1 Maryland;

(3) Examine and make recommendations to maximize the use of information technology in making 2-1-1 services available throughout the State; **AND**

[(4) Evaluate the performance of each 2-1-1 Maryland call center;

(5) Make recommendations to 2-1-1 Maryland regarding the quality of service provided by call centers or the performance of call centers when issues related to service quality and performance are presented to the Department;

(6) Make recommendations regarding corrective action to be taken by a call center, as appropriate; and

(7)] (4) Make recommendations to 2-1-1 Maryland regarding the establishment of an opt-in mental health services phone call program that:

(i) Requires a call center to call individuals who have opted in to the mental health services phone call program on a periodic basis, as determined by 2-1-1 Maryland; and

(ii) Attempts to connect individuals to a provider of mental health services if the individual requests to speak to a mental health provider during a call with 2-1-1 Maryland.

(b) The Governor may include in the annual budget bill an appropriation to the Department in an amount sufficient to carry out subsection [(a)(7)] (A)(4) of this section.

(c) On or before December 31, 2005, and every year thereafter, the Department, in consultation with 2-1-1 Maryland, shall report to the Governor and, subject to § 2-1257 of the State Government Article, to the General Assembly on the activities performed under subsection (a) of this section.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

(a) It is the intent of the General Assembly that the 2-1-1 Maryland board of directors be expanded to include two representatives of 2-1-1 Maryland call centers nominated by the 2-1-1 Maryland call centers.

(b) On or before July 1, 2024, the 2-1-1 Maryland call centers shall nominate two representatives to serve on the 2-1-1 Maryland board of directors.

~~SECTION 2. 3.~~ SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October June 1, 2024.