

By: Senator(s) Chaney

To: Public Utilities

SENATE BILL NO. 2499

1 AN ACT TO CREATE A 211 PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD TO INSURE  
 2 PROPER PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION AND OPERATION OF A STATEWIDE 211  
 3 INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SYSTEM; TO DEFINE THE TERM "211  
 4 INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SYSTEM" AS A SYSTEM BY WHICH A PERSON MAY  
 5 BE CONNECTED TO AN OPERATOR WHO CAN ANSWER QUESTIONS RELATED TO  
 6 COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAMS WITHIN A SPECIFIC REGION; TO PRESCRIBE  
 7 THE DUTIES OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSIONER IN REGARD TO THE  
 8 PLANNING OF THE SYSTEM; TO PROVIDE FOR THE SERVICES OFFERED BY THE  
 9 SYSTEM; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

10 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

11 **SECTION 1.** As used in this act, the following terms and  
 12 phrases shall have the meanings hereinafter ascribed to them:

13 (a) "Basic system" means a telephone service which  
 14 automatically connects a person dialing the digits 211 to an  
 15 established information and referral answering point through  
 16 normal telephone service facilities.

17 (b) "Board" means the 211 Planning Advisory Board  
 18 provided for in this act.

19 (c) "Commission" means the Mississippi Public Service  
 20 Commission.

21 (d) "Community service programs" include, but are not  
 22 limited to, housing assistance, utility bill payments assistance  
 23 programs, food pantries, counseling, legal aid, hospice services,  
 24 services for the aged, substance abuse programs, physical abuse  
 25 programs, sexual abuse programs and hurricane and terrorism  
 26 emergency response.

27 (e) "211 information and referral telephone system"  
 28 means a system by which a person may dial the digits 211 and be  
 29 connected to an operator who can answer questions related to  
 30 community service programs within a specific region.

31 (f) "Public agency" or "private organizations" means  
32 any federal, state or local agency, political subdivision of the  
33 state, or private organization which provides or has authority to  
34 provide human services for personal, family or financial problems.

35 **SECTION 2.** (1) In order to insure proper planning,  
36 implementation and operation of a statewide system, the 211  
37 Planning Advisory Board is hereby created to consider and make  
38 recommendations concerning such planning, implementation and  
39 operation of the statewide system and then submit to the  
40 commission technical conference for its consideration.

41 (2) The board shall be composed of one (1) designee from  
42 each of the following organizations or state agencies:

43 (a) Governor's Office of Community Programs.

44 (b) Mississippi Alliance of Information and Referral  
45 Systems.

46 (c) Mississippi Association of Nonprofit Organizations.

47 (d) Mississippi Association of United Way.

48 (e) Mississippi Association of Volunteer Center  
49 Directors.

50 (f) Mississippi Department of Health.

51 (g) Mississippi Public Service Commission.

52 (h) Mississippi Energy Management Agency.

53 (i) Mississippi Department of Social Service.

54 (j) Mississippi Chapter of the Association of Public  
55 Safety Communication Officers.

56 (k) Mississippi Chapter of the National Emergency  
57 Number Association.

58 (3) The members of the board shall serve without additional  
59 compensation.

60 (4) The board shall be co-chaired by the designees of the  
61 Mississippi Association of United Way and the Mississippi Alliance  
62 of Information and Referral Systems. Six (6) members of the board

63 shall be considered a quorum, and the board may take official  
64 action upon the affirmative vote of six (6) members.

65 **SECTION 3.** (1) The Mississippi Public Service Commission is  
66 hereby authorized to:

67 (a) (i) Direct the staff of the commission to conduct  
68 a technical conference on the subject of establishing a statewide  
69 211 information and referral system.

70 (ii) At the technical conference the board shall  
71 advise the commission on the need for a statewide 211 information  
72 and referral system, procedures for implementing and managing the  
73 system and the costs associated with providing the service.

74 (iii) Upon completion of the technical conference,  
75 a staff report and recommendation shall be submitted to the  
76 commission for consideration.

77 (b) Issue a finding in the form of a resolution  
78 relative to the establishment of a statewide 211 information and  
79 referral telephone system.

80 (c) Propose legislation detailing the establishment of  
81 a statewide 211 information and referral system to the  
82 Legislature.

83 (2) Upon adoption of a legislative act establishing a  
84 statewide 211 information and referral system and establishing a  
85 funding mechanism, the 211 Planning Advisory Board shall be  
86 abolished and the commission shall appoint and establish a board  
87 charged with overseeing the operations of statewide 211 services.

88 **SECTION 4.** (1) The system shall be composed of people to  
89 answer calls to the 211 number who are knowledgeable about the  
90 available human service resources in the state and who can offer  
91 intervention, advice and guidance when citizens have personal,  
92 family or financial problems which are not public health or safety  
93 emergencies of the kind for which the 911 emergency number is  
94 provided.

95           (2) The digits 211 shall be the primary information and  
96 referral telephone number within the system, but a separate number  
97 for nonemergency telephone calls may be maintained.

98           **SECTION 5.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
99 and after July 1, 2004.