

**PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**  
**Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17105-3265**

**Petition of United Way of Pennsylvania  
For Information and Referral for the  
Assignment of 2-1-1 Abbreviated Dialing  
Code and the Designation of PA 2-1-1 as  
The Lead Implementing Agency for  
Pennsylvania 2-1-1 Service.**

**Public Meeting held February 11, 2010  
2136921-LAW  
Docket No. P-2009-2136921**

**STATEMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN TYRONE J. CHRISTY**

Today, the Commission approved the United Way of Pennsylvania's Petition, thereby designating PA 2-1-1 as the lead implementing agency of the 2-1-1 abbreviated dialing code for providing information and referral services in Pennsylvania. The implementation of 2-1-1 in Pennsylvania is long overdue as Pennsylvania is one of the last remaining states that do not have a 2-1-1 system in place. Over 234 million Americans have been served through 244 2-1-1 systems covering all or part of 48 states, plus Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico.

The implementation of a 2-1-1 system in Pennsylvania is an important step toward more effectively coordinating our government-related services by providing a single phone number that individuals may call when they are seeking information about assistance in paying their utility bills and weatherization services, as well as information on unemployment compensation, food banks, educational seminars, and other available services. Moreover, the 2-1-1 system proposed by PA 2-1-1 will be available 24 hours a day and will provide for a quick response in emergency situations.

Our approval of the United Way of Pennsylvania's Petition comes at an opportune time when the Commission has already taken steps to coordinate the universal service programs for low-income customers that are provided by the utilities under our jurisdiction with other state and federal assistance programs, such as the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Most notably, we have been working on effectively coordinating the weatherization services available through the utilities' Low Income Usage Reduction Programs (LIURP), the electric distribution companies' Act 129 programs, and Pennsylvania's Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), administered by the Department of Community and Economic Development.<sup>1</sup> I believe the coordination that will be achieved through 2-1-1 will coincide with and further enhance our efforts to coordinate the various utility assistance programs that exist in Pennsylvania.

I have long been a supporter of the coordination of Pennsylvania's various assistance programs, particularly after seeing first-hand one such program that has been successfully implemented and run by the United Way of Butler County in my hometown

---

<sup>1</sup> Vice Chairman Tyrone J. Christy and Commissioner Wayne E. Gardner sponsored a Joint Motion at the May 14, 2009 public meeting, directing the formation of the Universal Service Coordination Working Group.

of Butler, Pennsylvania – the Butler County Emergency Relief Initiative (BERI).<sup>2</sup> I am comfortable with the United Way of Pennsylvania leading the charge with 2-1-1 as I have observed the United Way of Butler County's leadership and execution of the BERI program under the direction of Leslie Osche, the Executive Director of the United Way of Butler County and Vice Chair of the Pennsylvania United Way. I have been impressed with the efforts of all of the individuals and organizations that have made contributions to BERI and put in a great deal of time and work to make the program such a success.

In approving the United Way of Pennsylvania's Petition, we have not made a decision on how Pennsylvania's 2-1-1 system will be funded as there are no federal mandates regarding who should pay for 2-1-1. The United States Senate is currently considering Senate Bill 211, which would award grants to each state for establishing 2-1-1 services. In my opinion, the passage of Senate Bill 211 and the availability of federal funds would greatly assist Pennsylvania in our implementation of 2-1-1. The Commission has sent letters in support of Senate Bill 2-1-1 to Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr. and Senator Arlen Specter, co-sponsors of the legislation. It is my hope that the federal legislation will be passed and Pennsylvania's citizens will receive the full benefit of PA 2-1-1's initiative.

While we are pushing for federal financial assistance by supporting the legislation sponsored by our United States Senators, we also need to continue to be diligent in our Pennsylvania legislative initiatives to seek matching state funds that we anticipate will be necessary to make 2-1-1 a reality. Moreover, I encourage the jurisdictional local exchange carriers to analyze the costs of the implementation of 2-1-1 through the translation process at their switches and to step up to the plate to help make the 2-1-1 system a success in Pennsylvania.

This Commission's approval today of the United Way of Pennsylvania's Petition is an important first step in making 2-1-1 a reality; however, more work is needed. I believe that if we work together we can create a successful 2-1-1 system in Pennsylvania to provide our citizens with easier access to information about our many available assistance programs.

---

**DATE**

---

**TYRONE J. CHRISTY, VICE CHAIRMAN**

---

<sup>2</sup> BERI is unique in its level of coordination and accessibility. Through a single phone number, low-income customers are directed to the assistance programs that are the most appropriate for them. The Single Point of Contact coordinates utility assistance for residents with local providers in Butler County, among them, public utility companies, deliverable fuel providers, the Housing Authority, Salvation Army, and Catholic Charities. BERI offers financial assistance to customers who have exhausted all other assistance resources or have "fallen through the cracks." At the same time, it prevents any abuse of resources by the public and any duplication of assistance received.