



**United Way of Connecticut**

**2-1-1**

**Select Committee on Children - Public Hearing  
March 4, 2010**

**Testimony Presented by United Way of Connecticut**

My name is Richard Porth. I serve as the CEO of United Way of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today about HB 5360, AAC Children in the Recession and about how United Way of Connecticut contributes to addressing a number of the bill's priorities.

United Way of Connecticut (UWC) helps meet the needs of Connecticut residents by providing information, education, and connection to health and human services. We have been partners with the State of Connecticut for many years; and we are proud of our service together with the state government to tens of thousands of Connecticut residents through 2-1-1 services, 2-1-1 Child Care services, HUSKY Infoline, Child Development Infoline, and Care 4 Kids. All of these services are provided in partnership with the State government and primarily funded by the Department of Social Services. UWC also receives funding from the Department of Public Health, the Department of Developmental Services, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Transportation.

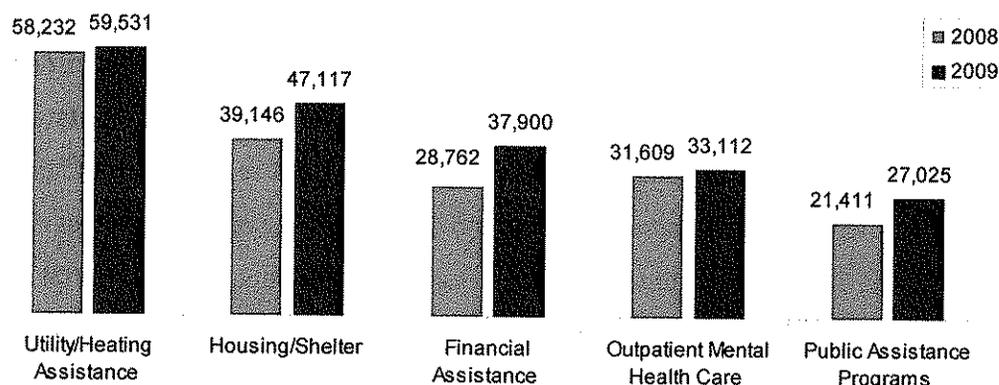
United Way of Connecticut's 2-1-1 is Connecticut's link for state residents to find the health and human services they need to weather difficult times and to make a better life. 2-1-1 is free, confidential, and available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to all state residents regardless of income, language, or age. 2-1-1 uses a regularly updated computerized database with information on approximately 4,500 public and non-profit health and human service providers, 48,000 different services, and over 4,800 licensed child care providers. During 2009, 2-1-1 handled over 360,000 calls and nearly half a million service requests. And, the 211ct.org website recorded more than 525,000 searches in our online 2-1-1 database. We refer people to a range of human services from utilities and housing and food to financial assistance, and more. We also record those requests in the aggregate to provide reports to inform government and nonprofit leaders on the level of need for various types of human services.

United Way of Connecticut is working hard on a number of the priorities outlined in HB 5360, helping to

streamline and integrate public information and access to services, and providing access to applications on-line and to our 2-1-1 Navigator benefits screener. 2-1-1 currently serves as the single point of entry for people facing homelessness in the new Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program. And, when we take calls in our 2-1-1 center, a large proportion of them address priorities within HB 5360.

More and more, callers seek help with basic needs such as paying for utilities, finding housing, financial assistance, food resources and public assistance programs. In 2009, referrals for basic needs services rose, in some cases dramatically, and accounted for 41 percent of all referrals. The largest increases in referrals were for housing, financial assistance, and public assistance programs. Referrals for utility assistance topped the list but saw a lesser increase (Figure 1).

**Figure 1 – United Way 2-1-1 Top 5 Requests for Service: Connecticut – 2008, 2009**



Source: United Way 2-1-1

State support for 2-1-1 ensures that more people will have an opportunity to access a range of health and human services for which the state provides millions of dollars of funding. It is a modest investment in the state's human services delivery infrastructure during these tough times when thousands of Connecticut residents need such help, many for the first time. State support also allows UWC to continue as a strong partner for state government, responding nimbly and professionally to state requests for help on specific projects which need quick follow through. Again, we are proud of our work in partnership with the state government serving children and their families particularly during this time of great need in Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

Attachment: UWC 2-1-1 Information Sheet