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H. R. 8520

To facilitate nationwide accessibility and coordination of 211 services in order to provide information and referral to all individuals in the United States for health and human services needs, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 27, 2026

Mr. MCGARVEY (for himself, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. CORREA, Mr. GARCIA of California, Mr. TONKO, Mrs. SYKES, Mr. FROST, and Mr. MORELLE) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

A BILL

To facilitate nationwide accessibility and coordination of 211 services in order to provide information and referral to all individuals in the United States for health and human services needs, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Human-Services Emer-
5 gency Logistics Program Act of 2026” or the “HELP Act
6 of 2026”.

1 **SEC. 2. STRENGTHENING NATIONWIDE ACCESSIBILITY AND**
2 **COORDINATION OF 211 SERVICES FOR INFOR-**
3 **MATION AND REFERRAL FOR HEALTH AND**
4 **HUMAN SERVICES.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Health and
6 Human Services (in this Act referred to as the “Sec-
7 retary”) shall establish a program for the following pur-
8 poses:

9 (1) To increase the capacity of 211 services in
10 the States, to ensure 211 services are directly acces-
11 sible to all individuals in each State.

12 (2) To increase coordination between 211, 988,
13 and 911 service providers.

14 (3) To increase awareness and use of 211 serv-
15 ices by the public.

16 (b) ADMINISTRATION.—In carrying out the program
17 under subsection (a), the Secretary shall select one admin-
18 istering agency to assist the Secretary in implementing
19 such program.

20 (c) ALLOTMENTS.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—For the purpose specified in
22 subsection (a)(1), the Secretary shall, using funds
23 made available under section 6 and in consultation
24 with the administering agency, determine the
25 amount to be made available for grants to qualified
26 211 service entities in each State.

1 (2) **FORMULA.**—The Secretary shall develop a
2 formula for determining the total amount to be allot-
3 ted for each State for the grants referred to in para-
4 graph (1). Such formula shall be based on popu-
5 lation, population density, poverty rate, and other
6 evidence-based predictive data related to the needs
7 in the State for, and access to, health and human
8 services.

9 **SEC. 3. ADMINISTERING AGENCY.**

10 (a) **ELIGIBILITY.**—An entity is eligible to be selected
11 as the administering agency under this section if such en-
12 tity is an organization that—

13 (1) is described in section 501(c) of the Inter-
14 nal Revenue Code of 1986 and exempt from taxation
15 under section 501(a) of such Code;

16 (2) has experience working with, and providing
17 technical assistance to, 211 service providers;

18 (3) has established relationships with local,
19 community-based organizations in each State; and

20 (4) has experience in disaster response and
21 Federal grants management (and the infrastructure
22 required to manage such grants).

23 (b) **DUTIES OF ADMINISTERING AGENCY.**—The du-
24 ties of the administering agency shall be—

1 (1) with respect to the purpose specified in sec-
2 tion 2(a)(1)—

3 (A) to advise the Secretary on, and make
4 recommendations to, the Secretary with respect
5 to State allotments from amounts made avail-
6 able under section 6, including the amount of
7 each State allotment;

8 (B) to determine the amount of funding,
9 on a State-by-State basis, using the amount of
10 each such State allotment, to be made available
11 to each of the qualified 211 service entities in
12 such State; and

13 (C) to award grants to such qualified 211
14 service entities in each State under section 4;

15 (2) beginning with calendar year 2026 and not
16 less frequently than once every 5 calendar years
17 thereafter, to submit to the Secretary an evaluation
18 of the network of 211 service providers throughout
19 the United States that is conducted in accordance
20 with subsection (d);

21 (3) beginning with calendar year 2026 and each
22 calendar year thereafter, to submit to the Secretary
23 the report under subsection (d);

24 (4) with respect to the purpose specified in sec-
25 tion 2(a)(2), to increase coordination among 211

1 service providers, 911 service providers, 988 service
2 providers, and other entities providing similar serv-
3 ices; and

4 (5) with respect to the purpose specified in sec-
5 tion 2(a)(3), to develop and implement a public
6 awareness campaign that—

7 (A) educates the public with respect to the
8 purpose, function, and use of 211 services; and

9 (B) ensures consistent messaging and
10 branding across 211 service providers.

11 (c) SHARED DATA PLATFORMS.—The administering
12 agency may use funds reserved under section 6 to support
13 shared data platforms, including with respect to the inte-
14 gration or sharing of 211 resource and service-level data.

15 (d) APPLICATION.—An eligible entity seeking to be
16 selected as the administering agency under this section
17 shall submit to the Secretary an application not less fre-
18 quently than once every 10 years, at such time, in such
19 manner, and containing such information as the Secretary
20 may require, including the following:

21 (1) How the eligible entity intends to—

22 (A) meet the goal of ensuring that every
23 individual in the United States with phone or
24 internet service can connect to 211 services at
25 no charge; and

1 (B) meet the goal of ensuring availability,
2 throughout each State, of 211 information and
3 referral services with respect to health and
4 human services.

5 (2) Information about the manner in which the
6 entity will—

7 (A) select qualified 211 service entities to
8 receive a grant (or subgrant) under this Act;

9 (B) develop, sustain, and evaluate the 211
10 services provided in the United States and work
11 to ensure sufficient 211 service provider capac-
12 ity for answering and responding to calls to
13 211;

14 (C) provide for increased coordination be-
15 tween 211, 911, and 988 systems and other en-
16 tities providing similar services to divert calls to
17 mental health and human services responders
18 who can assist individuals and link individuals
19 with voluntary, community-based services, as
20 appropriate; and

21 (D) use annual 211 operational data to in-
22 form the eligible entity's approach to assessing
23 the program and establishing oversight metrics.

24 (3) A certification that the entity will take all
25 steps necessary to ensure that all activities and in-

1 formation provided by the qualified 211 service enti-
2 ties receiving grants (or eligible 211 service provider
3 receiving a subgrant) pursuant to this Act will be di-
4 rectly accessible for purposes of the Americans with
5 Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.),
6 section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29
7 U.S.C. 794d), and part 1194 of title 36, Code of
8 Federal Regulations (or any successor regulations).

9 (e) EVALUATION AND REPORTS.—

10 (1) EVALUATION.—

11 (A) IN GENERAL.—The administering
12 agency shall award a contract to an inde-
13 pendent entity to conduct the evaluation speci-
14 fied in subsection (b)(2).

15 (B) CONTENT.—The evaluation under sub-
16 section (b)(2) shall address—

17 (i) barriers to access to 211 services;

18 (ii) effectiveness of 211 services at
19 connecting individuals to needed health
20 and human services;

21 (iii) the effectiveness of collaborations
22 among 211, 988, and 911 systems, and
23 other entities providing similar services;

24 (iv) the comprehensiveness of the in-
25 formation in the 211 databases;

- 1 (v) public awareness of 211 services;
- 2 and
- 3 (vi) user satisfaction with 211 serv-
- 4 ices.

5 (2) REPORT.—The administering agency shall
6 submit to the Secretary a report on the program
7 carried out under this section, with information
8 disaggregated by State and by each eligible 211
9 service provider, which shall—

10 (A) describe the activities or services fund-
11 ed through a grant by each qualified 211 serv-
12 ice entity receiving such a grant (or each eligi-
13 ble 211 service provider receiving a subgrant);

14 (B) assess the effectiveness of such activi-
15 ties and services in making available, to all resi-
16 dents of the State, 211 services for information
17 and referrals with respect to health and human
18 services;

19 (C) assess the effectiveness of collaboration
20 with resource and referral entities and service
21 providers; and

22 (D) describe the services to which individ-
23 uals were referred by eligible 211 service pro-
24 viders receiving funding under this Act and any

1 efforts to track the effectiveness of such refer-
2 rals.

3 **SEC. 4. GRANTS TO 211 SERVICE ENTITIES TO INCREASE**
4 **CAPACITY.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—The administering agency shall
6 make grants to qualified 211 service entities in a State
7 to expand the availability and accessibility of 211 services
8 in the State.

9 (b) USE OF FUNDS.—The administering agency
10 shall, as a condition on the receipt of funding under this
11 Act, ensure that any qualified 211 service entity selected
12 by the administering agency to receive a grant using such
13 funds, only use such grant for—

14 (1) the provision of 211 services via voice, short
15 message service, or other messaging, internet, or
16 other communication methods, including—

17 (A) the operation and maintenance of 211
18 contact centers;

19 (B) increasing public awareness of 211
20 services in the State in collaboration with 911
21 and 988 services and other entities providing
22 similar services;

23 (C) coordination of the State’s 211 serv-
24 ices, including the collection, accessibility, and

1 display of information through information and
2 referral databases;

3 (D) the conduct of statewide and regional
4 planning for the provision of 211 services; and

5 (E) any activities necessary to ensure that
6 211 services are directly accessible, consistent
7 with the Americans with Disabilities Act of
8 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.), section 508 of
9 the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C.
10 794d), and part 1194 of title 36, Code of Fed-
11 eral Regulations (or any successor regulations);

12 (2) the start-up costs of extending 211 services
13 to unserved areas, including costs of software and
14 hardware upgrades and telecommunications and
15 internet costs;

16 (3) administrative costs, such as staffing, train-
17 ing, and activities related to accreditation;

18 (4) infrastructure costs, including internet
19 hosting and site development and maintenance for
20 an information and referral database and the devel-
21 opment and maintenance of cloud-based data and
22 messaging capacity;

23 (5) the evaluation of 211 service provider activi-
24 ties and capacity;

25 (6) increasing coordination and collaboration—

1 (A) among 211 services within the State;

2 (B) with local 911 and 988 service pro-
3 viders; and

4 (C) with shared data platforms, including
5 with respect to the integration or sharing of re-
6 source and service-level data;

7 (7) the preparation and submission of reports
8 under State reporting requirements and to the ad-
9 ministering agency for purposes of section 3(b)(4);

10 (8) innovations that support service delivery;
11 and

12 (9) carrying out such other activities deter-
13 mined to be appropriate by the administering agen-
14 cy.

15 (c) SELECTION.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—

17 (A) STATE 211 NETWORKS.—Except as
18 provided in subparagraph (B), the admin-
19 istering agency shall award the State allocation
20 determined under section 3(b)(1) to the eligible
21 State 211 network in each State.

22 (B) EXCEPTION.—If the administering
23 agency determines there is no eligible State 211
24 network in a State, the administering agency
25 shall award grants from the State allotment de-

1 terminated under section 3(b)(1) directly to all el-
2 igible 211 service providers in such State.

3 (2) CONSIDERATIONS.—In awarding grants to
4 all eligible 211 service providers in a State under
5 paragraph (1)(B), the administering agency shall
6 consider—

7 (A) the ability of the 211 service provider
8 seeking the grant to carry out activities in fur-
9 therance of the provision of 211 services;

10 (B) the extent to which the award of the
11 grant will facilitate equitable geographic dis-
12 tribution of grants to ensure that rural commu-
13 nities have access to 211 services; and

14 (C) the extent to which the award of the
15 grant will further the goals of—

16 (i) making available 211 services to
17 all individuals in a State via voice, short
18 message service, or other messaging, inter-
19 net, or other communication methods; and

20 (ii) increasing the provision of com-
21 munity information and referral with re-
22 spect to health and human services, among
23 individuals, families, agencies seeking such
24 services and the providers of such services.

1 (3) CONDITIONS.—The administering agency
2 shall ensure that each qualified 211 service entity
3 submits an application and agrees, as a condition on
4 the receipt of funds under this section—

5 (A) in making 211 services available, to
6 the maximum extent practicable, to—

7 (i) abide by the most recently issued
8 version of the Inform USA Standards and
9 Quality Indicators for Professional Infor-
10 mation and Referral or a comparable set of
11 standards;

12 (ii) collaborate with public and private
13 organizations that provide health and
14 human services and existing national, re-
15 gional, and local information and referral
16 systems to provide an exhaustive and com-
17 prehensive database of services that is
18 maintained and updated on a consistent
19 basis from which to provide information or
20 referrals to individuals using 211 services;
21 and

22 (iii) ensure State-level coordination
23 across all 211 service providers in such
24 State; and

1 (B) to provide matching funds, in the form
2 of cash or in-kind contributions, from non-Fed-
3 eral sources in an amount equal to not less
4 than 25 percent of the amount of funds re-
5 ceived by the entity under this section.

6 (d) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS FOR CERTAIN
7 STATES.—In the case of a State described in subsection
8 (c)(1)(B), the administering agency may use, of the
9 amount of the allocation determined for such State under
10 section 2(c), an amount determined by the administering
11 agency necessary to cover additional administrative ex-
12 penses incurred by the administering agency resulting
13 from the lack of an eligible State 211 network in such
14 State.

15 **SEC. 5. DEFINITIONS.**

16 In this Act:

17 (1) 211 SERVICE.—The term “211 service”
18 means providing individuals with information and
19 referrals, via voice telephone, text telephone, short
20 message service, text, internet phone, or other com-
21 munication methods, with respect to health and
22 human services and referrals to agencies providing
23 health and human services.

1 (2) ELIGIBLE 211 SERVICE PROVIDER.—The
2 term “eligible 211 service provider” means a pro-
3 vider of 211 services that—

4 (A) is a nonprofit or governmental entity;

5 (B) has the capability (directly or through
6 contract with another entity) to provide such
7 services via phone at no charge to the con-
8 sumer; and

9 (C) has access to the applicable State or
10 local 211 dialing code.

11 (3) QUALIFIED 211 SERVICE ENTITY.—The
12 term “qualified 211 service entity” means—

13 (A) an eligible State 211 network; and

14 (B) in the case of a State described in sec-
15 tion 4(c)(1)(B), an eligible 211 service provider.

16 (4) ELIGIBLE STATE 211 NETWORK.—The term
17 “eligible State 211 network” means a nonprofit enti-
18 ty that—

19 (A) represents all eligible 211 service pro-
20 viders in a State; and

21 (B) provides coordination or infrastructure
22 for providers of 211 services, including—

23 (i) acting as a fiscal agent for State
24 211 funding; or

1 (ii) supporting information and refer-
2 ral databases, phone systems, dashboards,
3 web access, or text and website chat tools.

4 (5) HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES.—The term
5 “health and human services” means services pro-
6 vided with respect to homelessness and housing sup-
7 ports, veterans resources, food assistance, disaster
8 response and recovery resources, workforce develop-
9 ment, community health resources, mental health re-
10 sources, caregiving resources, domestic violence re-
11 sources, and other health and human service needs,
12 that—

13 (A) assist individuals in becoming more
14 self-sufficient, in preventing dependency, and in
15 strengthening family relationships;

16 (B) address social determinants of health;

17 (C) support personal and social develop-
18 ment; or

19 (D) help ensure the health and well-being
20 of individuals, families, and communities.

21 (6) INDIAN TRIBE; TRIBAL ORGANIZATION.—
22 The terms “Indian Tribe” and “Tribal organiza-
23 tion” have the meanings given such terms in section
24 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education
25 Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

1 (7) STATE.—The term “State” means the sev-
2 eral States, the District of Columbia, the Common-
3 wealth of Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Is-
4 lands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Common-
5 wealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, or an In-
6 dian Tribe or Tribal organization.

7 **SEC. 6. FUNDING.**

8 (a) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
9 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act
10 \$250,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2032,
11 to remain available until expended.

12 (b) RESERVATION.—Of the amount made available
13 under paragraph (1) to carry out this Act for a fiscal year,
14 the Secretary may reserve not more than 10 percent for
15 administrative and coordinating activities by the admin-
16 istering agency (including the expenditures referred to in
17 section 4(d)).

○