PRESS RELEASE

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United Way and Secretary Gorbea Announce Launch of 211 Voter Information Hotline

Providence, R.I. (August 24, 2022) Building off the successful use of 211 as a voter information hotline in 2020, United Way of Rhode Island today announced a partnership with Secretary of State Nellie M. Gorbea to establish a new, multilingual 211 Voter Information Hotline as elections draw close. The partnership also involves the Elections Division at the Rhode Island Department of State.

Historically, Rhode Islanders know of United Way 211 as a free information and referral helpline available 24/7 to assist with everything from food assistance, senior care, and prescriptions, to early childhood education, eviction prevention, and more. This partnership harnesses 211's social service expertise and language capacity — more than 200 are offered — to ensure that all Rhode Islanders have access to trusted election information.

By dialing 211 and selecting prompt 5, users connect with a trained United Way 211 call specialist able to answer a range of questions voters may have about this year's elections, including:

- Voter registration
- Polling locations and times
- Voting early in person
- Applying for a mail ballot
- Where to return their mail ballot

Voters may also text their zip code to 898211 for assistance. Text service is available Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The voter hotline will be available through November 8, and voters may also find answers to frequently asked questions at vote.ri.gov.

"Our work in equity is about connecting people to the resources they need to create change in their lives and in their communities," said Cortney Nicolato, United Way's president and CEO. "We want to help facilitate the impact that creates, and by leveraging our capabilities with 211, our neighbors have a one-stop resource to get all their questions answered."

The voter hotline was first created at the recommendation of Secretary Gorbea's Elections 2020 Task Force to assist voters during the pandemic. Earlier this year, the passage of the Let RI Vote Act requires a multilingual voter hotline be established every election cycle.

"Voting is the cornerstone of our democracy, and it is important that voters have convenient access to trusted election information," said Secretary Gorbea. "We're here to answer any questions you have so you can exercise your fundamental right to vote. Thank you to United Way of Rhode Island for once again partnering with my office on this important public service."

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Since its local inception, 211 has handled more than 2.5 million calls from Rhode Islanders through a direct human connection. During the pandemic, the program has handled 500,000+ calls, helping Rhode Islanders access resources and essential services during an especially vulnerable time. Rhode Island's 211 is a national model, and was the first in the country to offer mobile, on-location services through a specialized outreach van. The program also plays a vital, statewide role during storms and emergencies through its partnership with the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency.

United Way of Rhode Island is uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders. A member of the world's largest nonprofit network, we bring together individuals, businesses, nonprofits, community leaders, and government to tackle the root causes of inequity and achieve specific, measurable goals. Our programs include 211, the statewide front door connecting Rhode Islanders with social services, resources, and vital programs. Both directly and through grants to nonprofits, we are investing to build economic opportunity, advance childhood learning, expand philanthropy, and drive policy and participation. To learn more, visit unitedwayri.org, or follow us on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter.