



# Food Bank of WNY

Serving Cattaraugus, Chautauqua,  
Erie, and Niagara Counties

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Hon. Edward Rath III  
92 Franklin Street 4th Floor  
Buffalo, NY 14202

Dear Mr. Rath:

I am writing to ask your assistance in restoring funding in the Governor's 30 day budget amendments for 2-1-1, an easy-to-remember, three digit telephone number that people can call for help with non-emergency health and human service needs. For the past two years, the New York State budget has included \$750,000 to fund this needed service (down from the initial \$6.9 million of funding in 2006), but there is no allocation in the Governor's proposed budget this year. Restoring \$750,000 would preserve the services currently available to 93% of New York State residents.

Across the State, 2-1-1 serves more than 18 million residents – 1.5 million of those in Western New York. Nearly half of all calls to 2-1-1 concern basic needs and consumer services, resources that help ensure stable households and vibrant communities. Beyond day-to-day referrals, 2-1-1 is a crucial partner during disasters, taking the pressure off of 9-1-1 and first responders by providing essential non-emergency information to those affected. Most recently, in 2012 in the aftermath of Super Storm Sandy, 2-1-1 responded to 178,000 calls and recorded 1.9 million web visits.

With the work we do with helping those less fortunate here at the Food Bank of WNY, I refer to this program almost daily. It is so vital to us that we have included a link to their site right on our website and have had them speak at our seminars. We constantly get calls from people desperately looking for services and not knowing where to turn. With 2-1-1 we are able to have a place for them to turn to and know that they are not hitting another dead-end. It is very assuring to know that just because we don't know how to help them, somebody else does and will direct them properly.

Without this critical funding, individuals' easy access to crucial information on health and human services will be jeopardized, agencies will be left to re-instate costly duplication of phone services, and blind and visually impaired individuals will lose employment.

Please support the restoration of the 2-1-1 funding this year.

Sincerely,

*Kelly A. Burke*

Kelly A. Burke  
Agency Services Coordinator  
Food Bank of WNY