

JANICE QUINTANA TESTIMONY

POSITION: FAVORABLE

SB631: “WORKGROUP TO STUDY AND IMPLEMENT A STATEWIDE 3-1-1 NONEMERGENCY TELEPHONE SYSTEM”

HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

MARCH 31, 2021 AT 1:30PM

Chairman Pendergrass and Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk–

My name is Janice Quintana and I have worked in the government customer service and 311 space for over 18 years. I consider myself a 311 pioneer as I have been on the front lines since the inception of this game changer in local government. Due to my customer service experience in the private sector I was recruited in 2002 by Mayor Anthony Williams in Washington, DC as the Director of the Mayor's Citywide Call Center. This center was a one-stop government center (727-1000) that operated as a 311 Center but without the number.

In 2006, I was appointed by Mayor Fenty as the Director of the Office of Unified Communications. I was responsible for 911 and transitioned 727-1000 to the new and improved DC311. I was later recruited by both Charlotte, NC and Atlanta, GA where I served as the Director of CharMeck311 and ATL311 between 2010 and 2018. I helped create or was on the board of the first 311 conference and community groups including: 311 Synergy Group, Engage311, The Association of Government Call Center Professionals (AGCCP) and National 311 Executive Council. I was also a Govloop Featured Contributor and my blogs were specifically focused on 311 organizations and rock stars. I currently advise 311 leaders, organizations, and technology companies.

As a 311 pioneer in government customer service, I have watched from the front row the growth and transformation in improving city services and community engagement. Launching a simple telephony model served its purpose, but the next-gen 311 systems are full-scale civic hubs offering a variety of access points. Inspired by customer expectations and feedback the 311 community continues to increase connectivity options. Today's users access 311 through kiosks, chats, texts, websites, mobile applications, emails, artificial intelligence, and social media.

This system provides easy access to government services and increases civic engagement. Also, the non-emergency number is a vehicle that takes the burden off 911 systems. Because the simple three-digit number creates a one-stop-shop for assistance, constituents do not have to waste time navigating through confusing government directories. Instead, they contact 311 to request a service or report an issue. In return, they receive a tracking number and the concern is sent to the appropriate department. Above all, 311 is the virtual front door to city hall.

Popular 311 services include:

- Parking enforcement
- Graffiti removal
- Street and traffic light outages

- Potholes and sidewalk repair
- Trash, debris, recycling and bulk pickup
- Abandoned vehicles
- Water main breaks
- Noise complaints
- Rat abatement
- General information and concerns

During 2020 and 2021, 311 organizations continue to prove their value. They showed their agility by swiftly moving to remote work and handled every curve ball. They took a huge burden off 9-1-1 by being available for the community during the pandemic. From providing information to scheduling tests and vaccine appointments, food deliveries, and checking on residents. They were the main contact during civil unrest and inclement weather. The 311 centers in Texas are currently offering support to the 9-1-1 systems.

The 311 government non-emergency systems in North America are almost twenty years old. In 2001, Baltimore launched the first 311 platform in North America. Recognizing the inefficiency in government silos, 311 started a new way of governing. It did not take long for other city leaders to notice the success of this innovative business model. Notably, the improvements in service delivery, relief for 9-1-1, data collection and community engagement were staggering. The 311 revolution was born and other cities joined forces with Baltimore. In fact, there are over 300 311 platforms in North America. Additionally, the success of the 311-model continues to inspire and ignite innovation. For example, the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA311), The Republic of Panama (Panama311) and the U.S. Navy (Navy311). It is now time to take this business model to the statewide level.

This bill passed unanimously in the Senate, and I urge a favorable report on SB631.