



## MIFFLIN TOWNSHIP

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### Testimony in Support of SB 31

Frederick L. Kauser

Mifflin Township Division of Fire (Gahanna, Ohio) & The Ohio Fire Chiefs  
Association before the Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee

March 27, 2019

Good morning Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Senate Bill 31. My name is Frederick Kauser. I am the Fire Chief of the Mifflin Township Division of Fire which serves both unincorporated Mifflin Township in Franklin County as well as the City of Gahanna. I am also the principal administrator of the regional MECC 9-1-1 Center that serves 6 fire departments and 10 communities here in central Ohio. I am here today on behalf of the Ohio Fire Chiefs Association. My testimony will focus on the importance of the proposed legislation to our state's emergency services telecommunicators, also known as dispatchers, and their families.

Senate Bill 31 would allow the residential and familial information of an emergency dispatcher to be exempt from the public records law and gives them the ability to request that a public office redact their information from a list published on the Internet. The personal and identifying information of firefighters, police officers, and other first responders is currently exempt from the public record if requested by that individual. Emergency services dispatchers should be afforded the same ability to request that their personal information be removed from public access.

Senate Bill 31 represents a significant shift in the way we recognize public employees who answer and process our 9-1-1 calls for help, dispatch and deploy firefighters and EMT's, and manage critical radio communications and information. The proposed legislation acknowledges the critical link that dispatchers have in the delivery of emergency services within every Ohio community.

The emergency dispatcher's role has been characterized as "the first-first responder", the first to interact with citizens impacted at the time of an emergency – and the first to document information for every emergency. To illustrate the importance of how dispatchers are classified, federal legislation proposed on March 7, 2019 in the U.S. House of Representatives includes language to reclassify Public Safety Telecommunicators as Protective Service Occupations (as opposed to administrative/clerical occupations) in the federal Standard Occupational Classification.

This example demonstrates a federal shift in classifying these public safety professionals, appropriately distinguishing their roles and responsibilities, and potentially affording them the same rights and protections as other classified public safety workers. With passage of Senate Bill 31, Ohio would be taking a step in the right direction toward recognizing emergency services telecommunicators as first responders.

It is for these reasons that the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association urges favorable passage of Senate Bill 31. Thank you again for the opportunity to address the committee. I am happy to answer any questions that members might have

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