



MIFFLIN TOWNSHIP

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Testimony in Support of SB 4

Frederick L. Kauser

Mifflin Township Division of Fire (Gahanna, Ohio) & The Ohio Fire Chiefs
Association before the Ohio House Civil Justice Committee

March 23, 2021

Good morning Chairman Hillyer, Vice Chair Grendell, and Ranking Member Galonski, and members of the House Civil Justice committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Senate Bill 4. 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 across 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 to their families.

Senate Bill 4 would extend provisions for protecting personal and family information to emergency 9-1-1 dispatchers. The Senate Bill would make their personal information exempt from the public records law. Specifically, this would allow 9-1-1 dispatchers to request that a public agency redact their information from a list of public records. This action would prevent it from being broadly published on the Internet or requested through a public records request. 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 4 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 4, 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 4.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address the committee. I am happy to answer any questions that members might have.