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Sponsor Testimony

Senate Bill 50

Senate Financial Institutions & Technology Committee

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Chairman Wilson, Vice Chairman Hackett, Ranking Member Smith and members of the Financial Institutions and Technology Committee. Senate Bill 50 would help Ohio transition to a modern emergency communications system, allowing public safety to leverage the technological innovations that have already transformed much of American society.

Under a state next generation 9-1-1 system, all Ohioans, regardless of geography, would have reliable, accurate, equitable and state-of-the-art access to the following available services:

- Voice and integrated text-to-9-1-1, from traditional and new devices, with best location information available;
- Most accurate location available, including location data from the device and local jurisdiction GIS data;
- Calls easily transferred between jurisdictions, with increased collaboration improving emergency outcomes;
- Next Gen 911 would be an improvement in speed, resiliency and reliability over the current emergency communications system.

The next few paragraphs of testimony have all been taken from the “National 911 Annual Report: 2019 Data” published in 2020. The report is authored by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) within the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT).

The current 911 system has served the country well since its inception in 1968, initially with wireline service and more recently with wireless and Voice over Internet protocol technology. Next Generation 911 has now emerged as the desired level of service.

NENA is the National Emergency Number Association and they define Next Generation 911 (or NG911) as “an Internet Protocol (IP)-based system comprised of managed Emergency Services IP networks (ESInet), functional elements (applications), and databases that replicate traditional Enhanced 911 (E911) features and functions and provides additional capabilities. NG911 is designed to provide access to emergency services from all connected communications sources

(emphasis added) and provide multimedia data capabilities for PSAPs and other emergency service organizations.”

The report indicates that 20 percent of the Ohio’s Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) are capable of processing NG911 emergency calls for all service types (wireline, wireless, VoIP) using NG911 infrastructure that conforms to nationally accepted standards (NG911 capable means infrastructure and GIS). Specifically, this is the percentage of total 911 authorities (in Ohio) that have implemented NG911 systems for all service types.

To compare Ohio to other states, 33 states, said they have adopted a statewide NG911 plan (2019 data). This marks an increase from 31 states, in 2018. Another datapoint for the Committee’s consideration, 581,151 texts-to-911 were received in 38 states in 2020, compared to 188,646 texts in 33 states in 2018 data.

Often in our state the 911 systems in use were designed for landline telephones connected to permanent street addresses. Yet according to 2020 Ohio data, almost 80% of the almost 6 million (actual total 5,988,876) 911 calls were placed by cell phones.

Modernizing 911 services is more than just a convenience. For more than 50 million Americans with speech or language disabilities or anxiety disorders, text and data to 911 can mean the difference between life and death; or the difference between rescue and tragedy. Non-voice connections to 911 can also save lives of domestic abuse victims, or in active shooter incidents or in any multitude of other situations where non-voice communications are needed.

Thank you Mr. Vice Chair and members of the Committee for your kind attention to this critical topic. My joint sponsor and myself would be happy to entertain any questions you might have at this time.