



Ohio Senate Financial Institutions and Technology Committee

Senate Bill 50

Matthew G. Hiscock, City of Wadsworth, Ohio
Director of Public Safety and OML Representative to the
Statewide ESInet Steering Committee Since 2014
March 21, 2023

Chairman Wilson, Ranking Minority Member Smith, and members of the committee:

I am Matthew Hiscock, the Director of Public Safety for the City of Wadsworth, in Medina County. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee today.

The City of Wadsworth is approximately (16) miles west of Akron and (40) miles south of Cleveland. The city is home to approximately 24,500 residents and over (350) businesses along a diverse segment of industries, services and retail markets. Surrounding Wadsworth Township is home to another 4,500 residents.

The City of Wadsworth operates its own Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) and provides 911 emergency call answering and dispatch services to all 24,500 city residents and businesses, as well as the 4,800 surrounding Wadsworth Township residents and businesses.

I am here to provide proponent testimony on Senate Bill 50. A bill and its subject matter as vital as any infrastructure measure the 135th General Assembly will consider. A measure that will not only advance a necessary and essential lifesaving tool for all Ohioans but that will also provide Ohioans and first responders with the funding commitment to meet their current and future 911 needs.

Critical Importance of Next Generation 911 (NG911) to Ohio

The first 911 call was made some (55) years ago in Alabama. This universal emergency number was created to ensure that anyone in our country could quickly and easily reach first responders in their time of need. The 911 system is a proven critical lifesaving system. Ohioans use it every day to summons the assistance of public safety professionals throughout our great State.

Since that first 911 call, communication forms have become increasingly digital using texts, photos, videos, VoIP and of course cellular technologies. There is little dispute that Ohio's 911 emergency communications system requires a transition from outdated and obsolete analog technologies to current digital technologies that will support the diverse ways in which Ohioans communicate.

Upgrading Ohio's legacy 911 systems to NG911 systems is needed to ensure that every 911 call can be received, located, and responded to in a way that best meets the needs of Ohioans and provides first responders with the highest level of situational awareness possible.

The implementation of NG911 systems using a statewide ESInet to provide core backbone services is a transformational project for our State. The ESInet provides the groundwork for the innovative

NG911 technologies to work. The ESInet and its core services provides the underlying transport for the services required to process a call and its associated data from its entry into the ESInet to its delivery to the PSAP and a dedicated emergency telecommunicator.

NG911 systems represent a tremendous leap forward for emergency responders and their situational awareness. Because NG911 systems are IP based and broadband enabled, they make it possible for 911 telecommunicators and first responders to receive not only emergency voice calls but also the data relevant to dynamically evolving emergencies through the capture of photos, streaming video or even building plans and layouts, event sites, crowd locations or real-time weather and environmental conditions. Having the ability to receive and process this type of data is simply not possible on current legacy 911 systems. Achieving this ability will allow 911 telecommunicators and first responders to be more efficient and abundantly more aware when addressing emergencies. This access to real-time information can lead to faster responses, more Ohio lives and property saved and safer outcomes for public safety professionals.

PSAP's and networks sharing an ESInet can also help to integrate the seamless transferring and rerouting of emergency calls in large scale disasters or events when individual 911 centers can be inundated with high call volumes or experience technical outages. These NG911 networking capabilities will vastly increase the resilience and reliability of Ohio's 911 systems over the current legacy 911 systems.

Funding

Modern society's continued reliance upon new technologies and the proliferation in how Ohioans, observe, process and consume information requires that all communities keep pace and NG911 systems allow that to occur. The costs to keep pace require a modification in Ohio's current surcharge and a movement to capture fees from more devices capable of accessing a NG911 system.

Implementation will take time and involves many industry stakeholders throughout Ohio. One-time and reoccurring costs together with ESInet buildout, PSAP connectivity and accessibility are just some of the primary cost factors both the State and Local governments will incur with the transition to NG911 systems. An increased surcharge will make the migration to NG911 a reality for Ohio.

Summary

Ohioans rely upon their 911 services in the most trying of times in their lives. They rightfully demand that 911 services should have the same capabilities in Cincinnati, Columbus and Cleveland as they have in Mentor, Grove City or Wadsworth. The public safety technologies and systems that run the 911 system should be as dynamic, robust and resilient as the technology capabilities that all Ohioans enjoy in their daily lives. On behalf of the Ohio Municipal League and as an ESInet Steering Committee member who has spent countless hours with my fellow steering committee colleagues listening to the plight of emergency telecommunicators and their respective centers throughout our state, I urge you to stand with these emergency telecommunicators and public safety professionals and support SB50 as it provides for a vital technological infrastructure investment in our communities and the necessary funding source to aid in the provision of public safety services for all Ohioans.

Thank you for your time, and I would be happy to address any questions from the committee.