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Cheryl Subler, Executive Director

Ohio House Public Safety Committee

House Bill 96 – Interested Party Testimony

Charlie Schilling – Washington County Commissioner

Chairwoman Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the House Public Safety Committee, my name is Charlie Schilling, and I have been a Commissioner in Washington County since 2021. I appreciate the opportunity to submit interested party testimony on House Bill 96.

Washington County is the first county to come online to the new Next Generation 9-1-1 system in the state and we have already witnessed the firsthand benefits of this life saving system. We are currently experiencing significantly shortened call transfer times, which gives our first responders valuable time to respond to emergencies. The benefits of the new Next Generation 9-1-1 system are numerous, but they are also costly.



We are thankful for the additional revenue from the most recent 9-1-1 user fee increase from 25 cents to 40 cents. On average, counties received an approximate 25% increase in funding from the fee increase. However, the additional revenue is not sufficient to adequately fund 9-1-1 across the state on its own. In fact, a recent performance audit from the auditor of state's office found that state funding only supported 6.8% of county 9-1-1 operations statewide even with the recent fee increase.

Many counties, such as my county, are forced to use a property tax levy to fund 9-1-1 operations due to the lack of state funding. As elected officials, we have all heard complaints from our constituents about rising property taxes and I along with CCAO would like to try to help address that issue.

I believe that if we increase the statewide user fee to \$1.00, counties would be able to reevaluate the necessity of their 9-1-1 levies and potentially roll them back at a savings to our taxpayers. One of the goals of this policy would be to distribute the cost of 9-1-1 across all citizens, who are able to access 9-1-1 via their cell phone instead of relying on property tax owners. The increase in funding statewide will also decrease funding disparities in

counties and ensure that all counties have an adequately funded 9-1-1 system.

I know that fee increases are not easy issues to address, but many states across the nation are increasing fees to fund similar 9-1-1 programs. Our neighboring state of Pennsylvania recently increased their monthly fee to \$1.95, West Virginia increased to \$3.64, and Texas increased their surcharges on wireless bills by 350% during the last couple of years according to the Tax Foundation. I believe a fee increase from 40 cents to \$1.00 to be reasonable compared to other states across the nation and would allow counties to potentially provide property tax relief to citizens without sacrificing public safety.

In closing, I would urge the members of this committee and members to the House to support HC0401 sponsored by Representative Don Jones and Representative Kevin Ritter. This amendment would raise the monthly 9-1-1 fee from 40 cents to \$1.00. Thank you for your time today, I would be happy to answer any questions the committee might have at this time.