



State Representatives
Sharon A. Ray
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Chairman Oelslager, Vice-Chairman Plummer, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee – we thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 478 – to provide funding for the acquisition of an Inter-Sub System Interface which will provide interoperability amongst public safety agencies using MARCS and Non-MARCS Radio Systems.

This bill has been brought before you to address a major public safety concern that is facing many of our local communities. Our districts represent the communities with public safety agencies that have made a deliberate decision not to enter the Multi-Agency Radio Communication System offered by the State of Ohio through the Department of Administrative Services commonly known as MARCS.

There are several reasons these agencies have decided against joining MARCS. We have learned that there are multiple alternative radio systems that allow our communities to use public tax dollars to purchase their own systems and infrastructure that provide better quality of coverage, customer service, and system control at a significantly lower price than what is offered by the State owned MARCS System.

The problem with MARCS, as cited by many of these agencies, is that it has evolved from a “system of systems” to a one size fits all concept that doesn’t fit the communication needs of many local communities. With approximately 140,000 radios utilizing MARCS, MARCS has been forced to reduce the reach of each individual user from statewide to the user’s county plus one. Consequently, the coverage design does not provide much portable radio coverage in buildings for dismounted operations.

House Bill 478 seeks to provide the necessary indoor portable radio coverage each of our communities deserves while also providing wide area roaming for those communities at a much lower operating cost.

The problem for many of non-MARCS communities is a lack of ability to communicate and be interoperable with the MARCS system. This creates a serious safety hazard in some areas of the state where public safety agencies are not able to communicate with departments within their own County. For example, in Lorain County several fire departments on MARCS are unable to communicate with EMS and Police radios that are utilizing the Harris System.

Fortunately, this problem has an easy, low-cost solution. Ohio MARCS and alternative networks are APCO P-25 based systems. APCO P-25 provides a design standard for interfacing disparate radio systems which is called an Inter-Sub System Interface or ISSI. An ISSI would provide a critical link between our system networks in Ohio and the Ohio MARCS radio systems.

Giving the two systems the ability to talk to each other simply requires DAS to purchase an ISSI, which once installed will allow for communication between the two networks. This critical piece of equipment will require an appropriation of \$1,000,000 dollars in fiscal year 22 and will allow for local governments, law enforcement, and health and safety first responders to continue to purchase the radio systems that best fit their needs while also providing true interoperability between systems.

Thank you Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to testify - we will be happy to answer any questions for the committee.