



Representative Kent Smith

Ohio House District 8

HB 445 - Sponsor Testimony
Transportation and Public Safety Committee
State Representative Kent Smith, 8th District – October 26, 2021

Chairman Baldrige, Vice Chairman McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy and members of the Transportation and Public Safety Committee.

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony in support of HB 445 which would help Ohio update its administrative code to speed the advancement of modern technology for our statewide 911 system. I am pleased to be joined on this legislation by my friend and cosponsor, Representative Carfagna.

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 capable 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.

Where Ohio needs to modernize is through its routing and location technology. Routing and location define how a system interprets 911 call location information to route the call and accompanying information to a given PSAP. This speaks to the ability to use geospatial capabilities to relay a caller’s location to a PSAP.

The transition to NG911 call routing and location has been implemented by some PSAPs or for some specific call types. But often but the call traffic is still using legacy location and data.

House Bill 445 would help Ohio transition to a NG911 based emergency communications system that will allow public safety to leverage the technological innovations that have already transformed much of American society. Even more importantly NG911 will allow 911 to be more effective, more resilient, and better integrated with field responders.

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. Chairman and Members of the Committee for your kind attention to this critical topic. My cosponsor and I would be happy to entertain any questions you might have at this time.