

Testimony H.B. #445

Brian Rutledge

Columbiana County 911 Coordinator

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my testimony to you regarding HB445. My name is Brian Rutledge, I'm the 911 Coordinator for Columbiana County. A quick background on myself I've been a firefighter/EMT for 38 years and currently Captain with the East Palestine Fire Department so I'm very familiar with the benefits of bystander CPR and pre arrival instructions from trained Emergency Medical Dispatchers to those seeking help by calling 911 on what's most likely the worst day of someone's life.

Today I am here as 911 Coordinator and to explain the impact that HB445 has at the local or county level. I want to take you back to 2017 when the standards were established for the Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) and the telecommunicator that answers a 911 call in the State of Ohio. These are the same standards that are included in HB445. Just like all the other counties in Ohio, Columbiana County was forced to become compliant or lose the wireless funding from the State of Ohio. Columbiana County spent 2017 becoming compliant by training all forty-three of our 911 telecommunicators to be medically trained to provide medical

lifesaving assistance. This training consisted of bringing them together in groups for 72 hours of training. So if you think about it the PSAP paid the salaries of the telecommunicators on top of paying the telecommunicator to continue covering the PSAP because we know that 911 doesn't shut down. We worked with each of our PSAP's to make sure they met the requirements of minimum staffing, emergency power, continuing operations plans and a backup location just to name a few of the requirements placed on the PSAP's.

I mention all of this because in previous testimony the question was asked about unfunded mandates. In becoming compliant to meet these standards Columbiana County spent \$123,000.00 the first year and continues to spend close to \$40,000.00 a year to remain compliant with these standards. This is over and above all the other costs associated with staffing and maintaining a 911 PSAP. This was all because of unfunded mandates. Every year we are required to submit to the state that each of our PSAP's and dispatchers meet the requirements set by the state. The amount of wireless funds received in Columbiana County since 2014 has not changed by a single penny and has remained the same at \$210,416.76. In 2020 Columbiana Counties wireless 911 calls accounted for just under 85% of the total call volume for the year.

There is no arguing the modern technology provided by NextGen911 helps to save more lives than the basic and Enhanced 911. House Bill 445 will help to establish NextGen911

across the State of Ohio, but it comes as an additional unfunded mandate on top of the ones already established in the legislation from 2017. The only way to correct this and truly provide the best possible outcome to those in need is to increase the 911 funding to the counties. There is no better time than now to make this correct by increasing the wireless 911 fees to provide the much needed funding to support 911 at the county level.

In closing I want to thank you again for your time today and the attempt to make Ohio's 911 system the best that it can be. The 911 PSAP's and the telecommunicators that answer the 911 calls are truly the first of the first responders.

I will be glad to take any questions at this time.